The POWER of PURIM & and others plays by Irma Kraft

THE POWER OF PURIM
AND OTHER PLAYS

The drama is ever more potent than the printed page, and the mind of the child is never more fired with religious enthusiasm than when he himself seems to be taking part in the great drama of Judaism which has come down to us through the centuries.

THE POWER OF PURIM
AND OTHER PLAYS

A SERIES OF ONE ACT PLAYS
DESIGNED FOR JEWISH RELIGIOUS SCHOOLS

BY

IRMA KRAFT

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NOTE

The plays occupy from twenty to thirty minutes in presentation, and are designed for children from the ages of six to sixteen. The stage settings are accurately described, and the directions for presentation plainly given. The scenes may be made as simple or as elaborate as desired, since the plays themselves have been written with the idea of firing the imagination of the child. The costuming may be left to the judgment of the teacher.

THE POWER OF PURIM

THE POWER OF PURIM

CHARACTERS

MUTTER SIEGEL, *a busy housewife.*
VATER SIEGEL, *a German peddler.*
GRETCHEN, *their oldest daughter.*
HANS, *their oldest son.*
RUTH, FANNY } *their younger children.*
FRAU GLOBSTOCK, *their nearest neighbor.*
MANUEL RICO, *head of gypsy band.*
LUIS RICO, *his brother.*
ISABELLA, CARMEN } *Manuel Rico's daughters.*

THE POWER OF PURIM

TIME.—*The beginning of the present century.*

PLACE.—*The outskirts of a small village, Hatzfeld, in Southern Germany.*

The entire action of the play occurs on the eve of Purim, between sunset and moonrise, in the small farm-yard of the Siegels, a German family in moderate circumstances.

To the right of the stage a small cottage porch. In front of the porch a wooden bench. Toward the left a tree with another bench built around it. Various barn-yard accessories, such as wheelbarrow, etc., are scattered about; and the yard is filled with chickens and geese.

DISCOVERED AT RISE OF CURTAIN.—GRETCHEN, *wearing a large gingham apron, is feeding the chickens and geese.* FANNY *and* RUTH *are playing near her. Through the half-open door of the cottage their mother can be seen, busy in the kitchen.*

GRETCHEN

[*Throwing feed deftly.*] You chickens, don't you ever get enough to eat? You're just as hungry holidays as any other day!

RUTH

[*Seriously.*] Do you think *they* know it's a holiday?

FANNY

Such little chickens, how can they know *anything?* Gretchen, what's a holiday?

GRETCHEN

[*Resting her pan on her knees.*] A holiday is a time when you get everything you want to eat, and can wear your best dress.

RUTH

Then why don't we have more of them?

GRETCHEN

[*A bit puzzled.*] Because we can only have them, I think, when the Bible says so. Oh! but I guess you are too young to understand. [*She*

begins to throw feed again.] I'll tell you about this one when you grow up.

RUTH

[*Pettishly.*] Grow up! Grow up! Everybody says that whenever you want to know anything!

GRETCHEN

[*Thoughtfully.*] Well, perhaps I ought to tell you right now. You see, to-morrow is Purim, and we remember it, because long ago the good Queen Esther saved her people, the Jews—that's what we are—from being killed. You see, before she was married, she was just a poor Jewish girl, and her kind uncle Mordecai had raised her. One day the king saw her, and fell in love with her, and made her queen of all Persia. The king had a wicked minister, who wanted everybody to bow down before him. Mordecai wouldn't bow down before any human being. Haman was very angry, and he made up his mind to destroy all of Mordecai's people, the Jews. He didn't know that Queen Esther was a Jewess too. All he told the king was that he was punishing some of his unfaithful subjects. Mordecai found it all out, just in time, told

Queen Esther about it, and she begged the king, her husband, to prevent this awful crime. The king was so angry with Haman that he ordered him to be hanged in the very place he had planned for Mordecai. Don't you think we should be happy, dears, that the Jews were saved, because if they hadn't been, we shouldn't be here feeding chickens this very minute!

FANNY

[*Frightened.*] Oh! do you think anybody will ever chop off our heads, now?

GRETCHEN

I don't think so. That's why we ought to be happy. If *only* Vater didn't have to work so hard.

RUTH

I want to help too! I want to help too!

[*She rushes to* GRETCHEN, *and upsets the pan with the seed.*

GRETCHEN

[*Annoyed.*] There, now see what you have done! When I'm in such a hurry to help with

supper! And to-night we must be done extra early. [*As* Ruth *begins to cry.*] Don't cry, dear. That isn't helping sister.

[Ruth *tries to stop, and both bend over chickens and seed, until* Hans *comes in with school-books and with a basket of provisions hung over his arm.*

Hans

Hello, there, Gret— and you babies. Gee! it's good to be home. I'm awfully tired. [*Flings himself down on the bench.*] Mutter, Mutter, I've done all your errands. Now are you glad I'm back?

Mutter

[*Coming to kitchen door, wiping her hands on apron.*] I'm always glad and proud of my big boy. I was worried for fear you'd play too late after school and would forget all about the Megillah!

Hans

[*Crossly.*] That means Schul! Oh! Mutter, do I have to go? I'm so tired.

MUTTER

Why, of course, Liebchen, you're a big boy now. Do you want to stay at home with the babies?

HANS

[*Still growling.*] Ach, no! But nobody said they were going to Schul, none of the boys, I mean. And you know I always fall asleep.

MUTTER

A *big* boy like you? You ought to be ashamed to say it!

HANS

[*Slyly.*] But I ought to stay home. It needs a *man* to look after the children.

RUTH

[*Jumping up and down.*] O, Mutter darling, let him stay home. Then he can tell us stories, new ones. Yes?

HANS

And you bet I've got some grand ones I just thought of this minute.

MUTTER

[*Seriously.*] But that's just what you shouldn't do! I don't want you to frighten the children.

HANS

[*Drawing himself up proudly.*] Perhaps you don't know, Mutter dear, there are—gypsies around here.

FANNY

O—o—oh! Real gypsies? O Hänschen, do tell us about them!

GRETCHEN

Now, Hans, if you are going to get them excited, I shall never keep them in order while Mutter is away.

MUTTER

But where did you hear all this about the gypsies? Or are you having a little day-dream, as you have had so often?

HANS

Why, Mutter, I saw them myself, and you simply ought to let me stay home and take care of the children. *Please!*

MUTTER

[*Turning back into the kitchen.*] Well, well, I'll ask Vater. Perhaps you had better stay at home.

HANS

[*Turning a somersault.*] O, bully! [*Whispers.*] Come here, Kinder, and I'll tell you what I saw 'em doing to-day.

[*The children gather round him.*

FANNY

Real gypsies?

HANS

[*Impressively.*] Well, I didn't exactly see them, but I was just walking along the road when I heard singing and laughing. Way off in the distance I could spy lots of people dancing and having a jolly time. I watched them ever so long, and wished we could live there. I tell you, that's living.

RUTH

O Hänschen, tell us some more.

HANS

They live in tents and wagons, and I'll bet they never have to go to Schul!

GRETCHEN

But, Hans, they haven't any good homes like ours, or any good parents.

HANS

'Course they have to have parents; but their parents live with them, and they have fun all day long, just like a circus.

[*Hans turns somersaults, etc., while the children stand by delighted.*

RUTH

[*Awestruck.*] I never saw anything like it.

FANNY

I want to be a gypsy! I want to be a gypsy!

GRETCHEN

[*Thoughtfully.*] It all sounds very wonderful, and it might be lots of fun to live in a tent and not have to wash dishes, but I don't think it

is right to say we wish we were they. It might not be so grand if we knew *all* about it.

HANS

Just like a girl! I tell you if *ever* I have a chance to live like that, in a tent, and play or fish all day, and never have to wash my face or obey anybody—you bet, if I had just *one* chance, I'd take it, quicker than you could say "Matzoh Shalet."

GRETCHEN

I don't think you ought to talk that way, with your good Vater and——

FANNY

Vater, papa! Here he comes now!

[*A middle-aged man enters the gate. He has a pack of notions on his back, and is weary. When he sees his children, his face brightens.*

VATER

My darlings, how are you? Mutter, Mutter, here I am——

MUTTER

[*Runs out and kisses him while tying on her bonnet.*] O Simon, I'm so glad you got back. I was afraid you wouldn't be here in time for Schul.

VATER

Have I ever been late? But haven't I a little time for my babies?

MUTTER

I'm afraid not, Simon dear. Just a minute for a cup of coffee. It's almost five o'clock, and by the time we walk to Hatzfeld, Schul will have begun.

VATER

That's right, and we don't want to miss the Megillah. But, Sarah, I shall do without the cup of coffee. I'd rather give the children their holiday goodies.

[*He sits down on a little bench, the children climb over him, and empty his pockets of candy, etc.*

FANNY

Ain't it grand to have holidays?

VATER

[*Handing a ribbon to* GRETCHEN *and a book to* HANS.] Something for my big boy and girl who look after their little sisters. That's a fine story, Hans, that "Widow's Son."

HANS

[*Slowly opening it.*] Thank you very much, but don't you ever see any stories about pirates? or gypsies?

VATER

[*Smiling.*] They must have stopped writing them for big boys of your age.

MUTTER

[*Anxiously.*] Simon, do you think there is any danger leaving the children alone? Perhaps the gypsies——

VATER

[*Thoughtfully.*] Not if we leave our big son with them. Wouldn't they be frightened just to look at him?

HANS

[*Proudly.*] Just let 'em try to come here.

RUTH

If they only would!

VATER

[*Kissing her.*] Don't wish it, my darling, don't wish it. Well, Kinder, Vater would love to stay with you, but he must go in and get ready for Schul.

[*He goes quickly into the house.*

MUTTER

[*To* GRETCHEN.] There are many things for you to do, dear, until we get back. Give the little ones their supper. See that everything is locked up, and that no tramps get in.

HANS

Look at my big stick!

[*Shakes a big stick.*

MUTTER

And my little ones will be good, and not put their feet out of the gate until Mutter gets back?

FANNY

We'll be so good, if only Hans tells us some more stories about——

GRETCHEN

[*Putting her hand over her mouth.*] Little girls must not talk so much.

MUTTER

Hans, remember, nothing exciting. I don't want to be worrying about you.

HANS

[*Grumblingly.*] Ach! how can I be an old man, when I'm a little boy?

VATER

[*Coming out, clean and fresh, the Megillah in his hand.*] I only wish we could take them with us, Sarah dear, but since we cannot, we must pray for their safety until we return. May God watch over you and keep you.

[*He kisses them.*

GRETCHEN

Don't worry, father dear.

RUTH

[*Whimpering.*] I want to go with mamma.

FANNY

I want to see the gypsies.

GRETCHEN

You'd better go quickly, mother dear, before they both begin.

VATER

[*As they hurry out of the gate.*] Good-by, my darlings, good-by.

MUTTER

[*Moving off.*] How I do hate to leave them to-night!

HANS

[*As soon as they have disappeared.*] If you don't stop, I'll sell you to the gypsies.

GRETCHEN

Come, dear, we'll go in and fix supper.

RUTH

Can't I jump your back, Hansy? just once.

HANS

Well, just once.

[*While the girls are jumping over his back,* GRETCHEN *watching,* FRAU GLOBSTOCK, *a little old lady with a cane, comes stumping in at the gate. She wears a shawl, and carries a basket over her arm.*

GRETCHEN

[*Surprised.*] Why, Frau Globstock, I thought you went to Schul.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Wriggling her head and smiling.*] Do you think I could forget my babies on Purim? Have your parents gone?

HANS

Sure, and you'll never get there in time if you don't hurry.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*As if to turn away.*] So you don't want to see what I have in my basket?

FANNY

[*Running to her.*] O—o—oh! Of course. Is it something sweet?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Waving her cane in a circle.*]

"High low, high lee, high deedle—dee—dee
Some candy and cakes for my little pettees.
Naughty little Hamans with wicked raisin eyes."

[*She opens her basket, and takes out gingerbread men.*

ALL

[*Dancing around her.*]

"Frau Globstock, Frau Globstock, Frau Globstock,
The nicest old lady that ever grew up."

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*As she gives them cakes.*] My little dears, you aren't afraid of me, are you? You don't think I'm a witch?

RUTH

[*Wonderingly.*] What's a witch?

GRETCHEN

[*Putting her hand on* RUTH'S *mouth.*] S—s—sh, darling.

HANS

What do you know about gypsies?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Shaking her head wisely.*] Me? I know all about everything. But I advise you not to bother about bad people that would like to come and carry you off.

GRETCHEN

But why should they want to carry us off?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

Because they are bad and like to make money out of poor little babies. After they steal them, if their parents won't pay enough to buy them back, they stew them and eat them up.

HANS

I think that would be a great adventure.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

It might be in a fairy story. If it happened to you, dearie, I'm afraid you wouldn't think it so great.

FANNY

But how do you know? You never had any little children to be carried off, did you?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Sadly.*] No, my little children have all flown away. That's why I love other little children, and never want anything to happen to them. Hans, I wish you'd promise me not to think any more about the gypsies.

[HANS *doesn't answer, but sits with his head sunk in thought.*

GRETCHEN

I'll make him stop talking about them anyway, Frau Globstock. Don't you worry, or let us keep you from Schul.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Turning away regretfully.*] I'll not be late. I fly where others walk. Remember, when I come back, you will have some more little Hamans with the wicked raisin eyes. [*As she hobbles out.*] Atye, atye, atye! I fly where others walk.

HANS

[*Scornfully.*] I do believe she's a witch anyway.

[*In the distance* FRAU GLOBSTOCK can *be heard singing, "I fly where others walk."*

RUTH

[*As* GRETCHEN *goes into the house.*] Can't Hans tell us that story now?

GRETCHEN

I'll be glad if he will.

[HANS *sits down under a tree discontentedly, and begins to whistle. He pays very little attention to the children.*

FANNY

A story, a story! You promised us a story!

HANS

Ach, give me time to think.

[*The little children gather round his knee, and in a short time sounds of singing and a flute are heard opposite to entrance through which* FRAU GLOBSTOCK *has disappeared.*

RUTH

What a pretty song!

FANNY

[*Running to the gate.*] And what a pretty lady, two pretty ladies!

[*Four wandering minstrels enter the gate. They are the Ricos, and are dressed in old worn-out costumes. They carry various musical instruments, and might readily deceive people into thinking them strolling players. They continue singing and dancing a few minutes after they have ceased playing.*

RUTH

[*Jumping up and down.*] Isn't that grand? Do it again.

CARMEN RICO

[*Patting her curls.*] Dear little baby! Whom do you belong to?

RUTH

Vater and Mutter Siegel.

[*The gypsies whisper among themselves.*

MANUEL RICO

[*Aside to* LUIS.] Vater Siegel, a rich man. We will stay a while. Talk to them, Carmen.

ISABELLA RICO

[*Aside to* MANUEL.] I choose the baby, you may have the others.

MANUEL

Shut up, you will spoil our game, you women.

CARMEN

[*To* HANS, *who has been staring bewitched.*] We are very tired. May we rest here a while?

HANS

If you play for us. Who are you anyway?

LUIS

[*Striking an attitude, and turning a somersault.*]

"Dusty, dusty, travelers we,
Light of heart and full of glee."

MANUEL

We are travelers, and we are seeing your beautiful country. We know your father and shall wait until he returns.

FANNY

And you will sing?

CARMEN

Pretty baby, just like our little sister. Come here, dear.

ISABELLA

[*Looking at the cottage and sighing.*] I wish we had a house like that, I'm so tired of wandering.

LUIS

[*Sniffing the air and leering.*] "I smell, I smell a sweet to eat!"

GRETCHEN

[*Coming to the door, wearing a big kitchen apron.*] Come to supper—— Why, who are you?

LUIS

[*Jumping up and down.*]

"Merry, merry minstrels we,
Light of foot and full of glee."

GRETCHEN

[*Surprised.*] Do you live around here? I never saw you before. [*Warningly to* HANS.] Bring the children in to supper.

HANS

Ach, don't be afraid. They know Vater. Come on out, and hear the music.

GRETCHEN

[*Demurringly.*] I don't think we should, these strangers——

RUTH

But they know Vater——

GRETCHEN

[*Coming down the step.*] Is that so? When did you see him?

MANUEL

[*Quickly.*] This evening, on the road to Hatzfeld. He is at synagogue to-night for the Purim holiday. Isn't that so?

GRETCHEN

[*Evidently impressed.*] Yes—that's so.

LUIS

And here will we loiter until he returns.

ISABELLA

[*Sweetly to* GRETCHEN.] You'll like us, I'm sure, dear, as much as we already like you. We're old friends of your family.

CARMEN

[*Stroking* GRETCHEN's hair.] Such pretty hair! Why don't you tie it up? See mine.

[*Shakes her long black hair.*

GRETCHEN

But I must do as my Mutter says, mustn't you?

ISABELLA

Mutter, Mutter, what's a Mutter?

CARMEN

[*As if in ignorance.*] We have no Mutter, and we mustn't do as *anybody* says.

GRETCHEN

It must be nice to do just as you please. No dishes to wash—just play all day.

CARMEN

[*Shaking her tambourine.*] Happy, happy days! When we get tired of doing one thing, we do another. When we get tired of one place, we go to another. Don't we, Manuel?

MANUEL

Move on! move on! move on! Whom should we obey? The sky is our covering, the grass our carpet.

HANS

But don't you ever *have* to do anything?

LUIS.

O, yes, we entertain little boys and girls, and take them with us, if they want to go.

FANNY

And do you dance and sing for them?

ISABELLA

[*Using tambourine and dancing.*] Yes, this way, sweetest, and this way.

[*Kisses and hugs the little girl.*

MANUEL

And when we are tired, we lie down on the grass, look up at the sky, and have the birds sing us to sleep.

GRETCHEN

How lovely! *No beds to make?*

CARMEN

Beds, how foolish! Why do you need beds, when you sleep on the grass or in tents?

HANS

Tents! Then you are *gypsies?*

GRETCHEN

[*Frightened, gathers up her little sisters.*] Gypsies! Come in, children, quick, come——

ISABELLA

[*Seeing they have made a mistake.*] What's a gypsy? I never heard of them, did you, Manuel?

MANUEL

[*Brandishing his stick, fiercely.*] Who dares call us gypsies?

"Wandering minstrels, happy we,
Light of heart and full of glee."

Who dares call us gypsies?

HANS

I guess you made a mistake, Gret, you just thought——

LUIS

[*Turning a somersault, and assuming a grotesque attitude, which makes the children laugh.*] Did anybody say *anything* about gypsies?

CARMEN

Yes, darlings, don't let us keep you from supper.

GRETCHEN

[*Hesitating.*] Perhaps you would like some?

MANUEL

Many, many thanks, but we never go inside a house. [*Making a pass in the air.*] Bad, bad luck!

HANS

Isn't that strange?

LUIS

The air makes us very, very sick. We cough, and choke, and are very unhappy. We shall wait out here.

HANS

But that wouldn't be polite. Gretchen, couldn't we bring it out?

RUTH AND FANNY

[*Gleefully.*] Yes, let's eat under the tree. We shall help you.

GRETCHEN

All right! Only we must clear everything away before Vater and Mutter come home.

[*Hurries into the house.*

MANUEL

[*With seeming indifference.*] And when do you think that will be?

HANS

Oh, any time now. You can never tell just how long Schul takes, or whether they stop off on the way back. But I don't think they'll do that to-night. They're worried about gypsies.

CARMEN

[*Innocently.*] But why is your Vater afraid of gypsies? We aren't.

ISABELLA

How foolish! Of course, we aren't.

HANS

[*Wisely.*] Well, you ought to be, 'cause they're very wicked. They steal little children, then fathers have to pay a lot to get them back.

MANUEL

[*Teasingly.*] I'll bet your father wouldn't pay anything, he'd be so glad you were gone.

HANS

[*Earnestly.*] Oh, no, he wouldn't, because he loves us. He often says we're his greatest blessing. He's got a lot of money tucked away for us in case anything ever happens to him.

GRETCHEN

[*Calling from the house.*] Hans, do come here and help me bring things out.

HANS

[*Running.*] All right! Excuse me, I'll be out in a minute.

MANUEL

Hurry, hurry, fools. Or the old ones will be back and spoil our game. This is all too slow. You girls might grab the babies, I can manage Hans. Once we get them away, the old man will pay anything to get them back. You heard that he has money hidden?

LUIS

Why not tie up the brats, steal the money, and run?

CARMEN

No, I won't let you do that. You shall not harm them. They are too sweet. I'll not help, if you do.

ISABELLA

Nor I! Tie up that baby? I guess not. I want that baby to keep.

LUIS

[*Sneeringly.*] Soft-hearted women!

CARMEN

I said I am willing to help steal the children and keep them until their parents buy them back. But harm them, no!

LUIS

[*Sneeringly.*] He'll have to pay a lot all right for leaving them alone on this holiday.

MANUEL

All right! We'll follow your plan, if you

help us to get them away quick. S—s—sh, here they come.

[*The children hurry out, bringing cold meat, etc. All sit under the tree in comfortable attitudes, and eat eagerly.*

CARMEN

[*Eating cake.*] My! but this is good. Did you bake it, Gretchen?

GRETCHEN

Of course! I do a lot of cooking.

ISABELLA

But don't you get tired of working?

GRETCHEN

Sometimes. But there's always so much to do, I haven't time to think about it.

CARMEN

Wouldn't you like to live in a place where you wouldn't have to cook? Just eat, and eat, and eat?

GRETCHEN

Is there such a place?

ISABELLA

Come with us, we'll show you.

GRETCHEN

But I couldn't leave my sisters, not even for a minute.

MANUEL

They could come too, all of you, and be here again by the time your parents get back. Come to the beautiful place where the birds sing, the stars shine, and all is beautiful forever!

LUIS

Yes, come to the happy land, where you can dance and play all day, and at night lie under the stars. No errands to run on, no Schul to go to, no papas to scold us.

HANS

I should like to see such a place once!

CARMEN

Where we could dance and sing to you all day!

RUTH

Dance for us now!

CARMEN AND ISABELLA

[*Jump up and wink to* MANUEL.] We will all dance.

[FANNY *has fallen asleep on the bench, they all seem to have forgotten her.* MANUEL *plays the flute while all dance.*

GRETCHEN

Isn't it lovely?

ISABELLA

Come and we will show you how.

[*All dance around in a merry circle, the gypsies singing:*

"Merry, merry minstrels we,
Light of heart and full of glee.
Come with us and you shall see."

Dancing thus, they draw imperceptibly nearer to the gate and out into the road. They can be heard singing for a few minutes, then all is quiet. Lights are lowered, and there is no sound, save that of little FANNY *breathing regularly. The remnants of the supper lie forgotten on the floor. A few moments later* VATER *and* MUTTER SIEGEL *enter from the exit opposite to the one which the children have used.*

VATER

Ach! I'm so glad to be home again!

MUTTER

So quiet! I wonder if the children are all asleep? [*Calls.*] Hans—Gretchen!

VATER

[*Seeing crumbs and bread, etc.*] Why, what's this? Did you tell them to have their supper out of doors, Sarah?

MUTTER

No, indeed. I suppose they did it for fun. [*Sees* FANNY *asleep on the bench.*] This doesn't look right! Would my Gretchen do this?

VATER

[*Calling sternly.*] Hans! I want you to stop hiding! Hans, come out here.

MUTTER

Perhaps he's frightened. You look after Fanny. I'll go in and see.

VATER

[*Picking up* FANNY.] Very, very strange! I hope nothing is wrong.

MUTTER

[*Coming out frightened.*] Nobody—at—all —is—there—

VATER

What! Nobody! We must wake up Fanny and ask her!

MUTTER

[*Shaking the sleeping child.*] Darling, tell us, tell Mutter what has happened.

FANNY

[*Waking up partly.*] What is it, Mutter dear?

MUTTER

Where are Gretchen and Hans, and Ruth, my baby Ruth?

FANNY

[*Plaintively.*] I want to go—to—sleep.

VATER

But you must know, darling. Tell Vater where they have gone.

FANNY

Have gone? Have gone? Have gone? I want to go to sleep.

[*She falls asleep again.*

MUTTER

[*Despairingly.*] It's no use. She never remembers anything when she's sleepy. What *can* have happened to them?

VATER

Could they have gone to Frau Globstock?

MUTTER

They wouldn't do that when they promised me not to go out. Besides, I saw her in Schul, and she said she would stop here on her way home.

VATER

Did you look everywhere? Take Fanny and I will go in——

[*He runs into house.*

MUTTER

My darling, *can't* you remember where your sisters are?

[FANNY *doesn't move.*

VATER

[*Running out distractedly.*] What shall we do? What shall we do?

MUTTER

[*Begins to cry.*] Dear Lord! Help us! Help us to find our little ones.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Comes stumping in at the gate.*] What's the matter? What's the matter?

VATER

[*Wildly.*] Our children! Our babies! All have gone! All but Fanny here——

MUTTER

Could they be in your house, Frau Globstock?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

No, I have just come from there. But don't worry, dear friends, all will come right.

MUTTER

What shall we do, where shall we look?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

Are you *sure* they are not hiding?

VATER

If I only knew where they go to play, I could look for them. But I have been away so much.

MUTTER

And I am always so busy, I haven't noticed. But you, Frau Globstock— you——

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

Yes, I know every inch of the roadside, and the dells. I see them playing every day, and if you will promise me to stay quietly at home, I will bring your children back to you; for they are not far away.

MUTTER

[*Surprised.*] How do you know? People *do* say you know everything.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

Yes, they call me a witch, and I can be one when I want to. But promise me, Vater Siegel,

you will stay here, or I cannot bring your children back.

VATER

We promise anything, [*imploringly*] if you will only hurry with our darlings.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

And you, Mutter Siegel, compose yourself, and pray for me, as I go to find your children.

VATER

Only hurry! hurry! hurry!

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Skipping to the gate.*]

"I skip, I jump, I see,
I see your children three."

[*She goes out muttering.*

MUTTER

O how can we wait until she returns?

VATER

We promised, so we must.

MUTTER

Then I shall take Fanny to bed.

[*Goes into house, carrying* FANNY, *while* VATER *walks restlessly up and down, then sinks on the bench under the tree, exhausted.*

MUTTER

[*Coming back sadly.*] The way that baby sleeps! If only my others were lying beside her!

VATER

Come and sit down, Mutter, and we will pray.

[*They pray together on the bench, the light shines on their faces. In a few minutes—they are so weary—they fall asleep. Soon* HANS *and* GRETCHEN, *looking bedraggled and woebegone, enter the gate, and* FRAU GLOBSTOCK, *carrying the tired* RUTH, *follows. She pushes the children in; then, seeing the sleeping parents, she pauses. Taking* RUTH, *she places her in her mother's arms, and draws back behind the other children.*

MUTTER

[*Stirring.*] Fanny dear, tell me where my babies are. [*She wakes up.*] Why, it isn't Fanny at all, but Ruth, my darling, and— [*Shaking* VATER.] Wake up, wake up, here is Ruthie!

VATER

The Lord be praised!

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

And your other wanderers——

[*Pushing them forward.*

GRETCHEN

[*Sobbing at her mother's knee.*] I'm so sorry, I didn't mean to——

HANS

[*Sturdily.*] It was all my fault, I disobeyed.

VATER

[*Embracing him.*] O my son, my son!

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

They are only children, and the gypsies fooled them.

VATER

[*Horrified.*] The gypsies?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

Yes, they were only a bit down the road. It wasn't so nice, eh, my pretties?

GRETCHEN

[*Trembling.*] No, they hit us, and made us hurry. Then they talked about where they would hide us, until you paid enough to get us back.

MUTTER

Schrecklich! Then it wasn't so much fun after all, Hans?

HANS

[*Repentantly.*] No, Mutter. I guess after all home is best.

VATER

Frau Globstock, you have been very good to us. How can we ever repay you?

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

Ach! Shmoos! aren't they my babies too? Don't I love them?

MUTTER

[*Wonderingly.*] But, Frau Globstock, whatever did you do to make those awful people let them go? I should have been afraid.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Smiling.*] Ach! such stupid people! They thought I was a witch, so a witch I was. I waved my stick in the air three times, like this [*she does it*], and shrieked: "The Power of Purim, The Power of Purim, The Power of Purim! If you don't drop those children, I shall cast a spell over you forever!" They dropped them all right, and ran as fast as they could.

VATER

The Power of Purim! The Lord be praised.

FRAU GLOBSTOCK

[*Turning away happily from the pretty picture of the reunited family and hobbling out by the gate.*] The Power of Purim—the Power of the Lord you mean.

CURTAIN

A MACCABEAN CURE

A MACCABEAN CURE

CHARACTERS

PHILIP BECKMAN, *aged twelve.*
MRS. PHILIP BECKMAN, *his mother.*
BELLA, *his aunt.*
MOLLY, *his nurse.*
DOCTOR SLESINGER, *his physician.*
HARRY, "*Menelaus*"
SAMMY, "*King Antiochus*"
HERBIE, "*Mattathias*"
CHARLIE, "*Judas Maccabeus*"
MARK, "*Simon*"
ERNEST, "*Johanan*"
LOUIS, "*Eleazar*"
BERNIE, "*Jonathan*"
} *his friends.*

A MACCABEAN CURE

SCENE.—*The pretty living-room of* Mrs. Philip Beckman, *Homestead, Pa.*

TIME.—*The eve before Hanukkah, the present.*

DISCOVERED AT RISE OF CURTAIN.—Philip, *a pale-faced boy, lying on a couch, half-covered by a robe, left front. His mother standing next to him, with medicine bottle and spoon. On a chair beside* Philip *is* Doctor Slesinger, *whose hat and small medicine satchel lie on the floor beside him.* Molly, Philip's *withered old nurse, is fanning the sick boy devotedly. All around are scattered the appurtenances of a comfortable living-room: plenty of chairs, an open fireplace, a transparent screen before the fire. Lamps are lit, and the scene is pretty and cozy.*

DOCTOR SLESINGER

Yes, he has a little rise of temperature. You say he does not complain of any special pain, Mrs. Beckman?

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Anxiously.*] Not any more than usual. But he worries me a great deal, Doctor. For a long time now he has been pale and quiet.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Shaking his head.*] He should be out playing like other boys. Philip, won't you tell the doctor what hurts you?

PHILIP

It doesn't hurt anywhere.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Feeling his chest, back, etc.*] No pain at all? I must confess, the case puzzles me. How is his appetite, Mrs. Beckman?

MOLLY

[*In a trembling, high-pitched voice.*] O Doctor, no more'n a birdie. A little peck here

and there. It's only when Molly brings him a big piece of chocolate cake that he wants to eat at all.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Smiling.*] That sounds natural.

PHILIP

But I like chocolate cake.

MRS. BECKMAN

Yes, that's it! He nibbles what he likes—cake, candy, jam—but I can't get him to eat bread and butter.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

Sounds like a case of mother-love. I should advise a little stronger food than chocolate cake.

PHILIP

[*Burying his head in the pillow and beginning to cry.*] O—o—h!

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Lovingly.*] My darling! You're breaking mother's heart.

MOLLY

My love! Don't cry. Molly won't let them hurt you. [*Pleadingly to the doctor.*] Please don't tease my little lamb.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Out of patience.*] If he were mine, he would have some treatment of the boot-strap variety. I wish I could persuade you, Mrs. Beckman——

MRS. BECKMAN

But, Doctor Slesinger, you know this isn't natural. Philip doesn't sleep right; he dreams dreadfully.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Shaking his head and smiling.*] If he were older, I might say some love-affair, but who can conceal a secret sorrow at twelve? How about school? Is he interested, Mrs. Beckman?

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Horrified.*] Why, I don't send him to public school. Indeed not! Hundreds of children coming from Heaven knows where!

DOCTOR SLESINGER

Probably just what he needs. Hothouse flowers often wilt, my friend. At least they don't grow big like garden plants and vegetables.

MOLLY

[*Excitedly, crooning over* PHILIP.] Garden plants and vegetables! My pet, my love, my angel!

BELLA

[*A sweet young girl, hurrying in, her prayer book under her arm.*] Hello, folks! What! Our baby ill? [*Runs over and hugs* PHILIP.] My darling! And I thought Auntie was to be allowed to take him to Temple with her——

PHILIP

But—I—don't—want—to—go!

MRS. BECKMAN

I just sent for the doctor, Bella. You know Doctor Slesinger? [*They smile and bow.*] I was so worried about Philip!

BELLA

More than usually?

DOCTOR SLESINGER

I admit, he puzzles me too, Miss Bella. I can't find a pain or an ache.

MOLLY

In a minute our doctor will be sending him to school, along with the riffraff and everyday boys.

BELLA

But that's where he ought to be. Haven't I always said so? O Doctor, I do wish you would be firm and tell my sister that precious little Philip should be up and doing with other children.

PHILIP

[*Slowly.*] But—I—*want*—to—go—to—school.

BELLA

[*Delightedly.*] You hear him, Lottie, you hear for yourself. Don't you see it's foolish to keep your angel wrapped in cotton wool?

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Firmly.*] My baby shall not go to school, nor to Sunday school either. I cannot afford to

let my only child run the risk of contagious diseases and bad habits. You both know what ordinary boys attend the Homestead schools.

BELLA

Yes, *real boys,* with *real* blood in their veins.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

You're right, Miss Bella, quite right.

MRS. BECKMAN

But I teach him everything, every day at home. I give him Sunday school and Bible lessons most carefully myself.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

All of which does not include child companions. Mrs. Beckman, I begin to see why your little boy is pale and listless.

PHILIP

[*Listlessly.*] The—other—day—Sammy—and Charlie—and I—we played Indians. We had a battle with Daniel Boone and Custer and George Washington and—and Abraham Lincoln.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Delightedly.*] Wrong on the dates, but right in the spirit. Mrs. Beckman, that is all your boy needs. Normal companionship, even though he should come home with a dirty face and a bump on his nose.

MOLLY

[*Tragically.*] A *bump* on his nose!

MRS. BECKMAN

I'm afraid I can't follow your prescription, Doctor. My boy is already too imaginative, and those boys might some day lead him into a serious adventure.

BELLA

[*Picking up prayer book and muff.*] I give it up, Lottie. If you refuse to see that we are living in a real world, that your boy is only a real boy, and that, worst of all, you are cheating him out of his real youth—the case is almost hopeless.

PHILIP

I'm so hungry—I want some chocolate cake.

MOLLY

[*Hurrying out.*] Wait, darling, Molly will get it for you.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Snapping his satchel shut.*] I'm afraid I shall have to give up the case, Mrs. Beckman, until you are more willing to listen to reason. First, there is nothing the matter with your boy but a bad case of "spoiling," and secondly, I advise you strongly that he needs boys of his own age, not ladies, as companions.

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Softly, but with determination.*] I'm afraid, Doctor, I cannot agree that that is the cause of the trouble.

BELLA

Well, sister, you are coming to temple anyway. Philip is no worse than usual, in fact, a bit better. Come, Lottie. I'm sure that the calm and peace of the synagogue will prove to you that the doctor is quite right.

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Putting on hat and coat, sadly.*] Of course,

I don't want to miss service on Hanukkah—but, Doctor——

DOCTOR SLESINGER

I can only say, Mrs. Beckman, that your boy needs the tonic of human nature—some stirring interest, either real or imaginative.

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Shaking her head; goes over to* MOLLY *to give directions.*] Molly, now remember, toast and jam——

[*Continues to give orders quietly, while* DOCTOR SLESINGER *and* BELLA *talk together.*

DOCTOR SLESINGER

Seriously, Miss Bella, I wish we could get the boy away from here for a while.

BELLA

If only his father had lived, there would not have been this petticoat rule. [*A trifle mischievously.*] But don't give up, Doctor, I've a trick or two up my sleeve.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

What do you mean?

BELLA

[*Whispering.*] To-night, after we're gone, there will be some happenings around here.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

Nothing dangerous?

BELLA

O, no, I'm not so foolish. Just some real boys, who know how to live in the past as well as the present. [*As* MRS. BECKMAN *turns towards them.*] S—s—sh! Won't you order that Philip should stay here, in this room? Say you like the surroundings, anything——

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*Nodding "yes."*] Ready, Mrs. Beckman? I'm going too. I advise leaving Philip here on the couch. He seems a bit drowsy, and I'll look in on him again after temple.

MRS. BECKMAN

[*As she kisses* PHILIP *lovingly.*] Very well, Doctor. Molly, you will take the best of care of my darling?

BELLA

Hurry, dear, I fear we have already missed the opening hymn! You don't know how much I love going to the temple. I look forward to it all week.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

I too. And I am particularly fond of this holiday. Come, Mrs. Beckman, we're waiting.

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Reluctantly, at the door.*] Good-by, darling! Mother will be home soon.

PHILIP

[*Droopingly.*] By—by——

[*They all exit.*

MOLLY

[*Bustling around, lowering lights, fire, etc.*] By-baby bunting, mother's gone a——

PHILIP

[*Disgustedly.*] Aw, I'm no girl-boy!

MOLLY

My darling, Nursie will get you some more chocolate cake.

PHILIP

[*Lying down, disgustedly.*] O, everybody makes such a baby out of me——. I wish I could play Buffalo Bill or Jesse James or——

MOLLY

Klotchly-klotchly! Where does he hear such talk?

PHILIP

[*Burying his head in the pillow.*] If I can't do anything else, I'll go to sleep and dream of them.

MOLLY

Duckie, old Molly'll fix you nice.

[*She covers him up. He sinks into a restless sleep.* MOLLY *gets out her knitting, and sits before the fire. In a little while she too dozes, and soon sinks into a deep sleep. Shortly afterwards,* HARRY, LOUIS, SAMMY, HERBIE, CHARLIE, MARK, ERNEST, *and* BERNIE *steal in quietly. They wear heavy overcoats, scarcely concealing costumes beneath.*

HARRY

[*Whispering.*] Think it's all right, fellows? Miss Bella, she made me promise to go ahead whatever happened.

LOUIS

Sure—but, look, he's asleep! And his nurse too—a big boy like him to have a *nurse!*

SAMMY

'Tain't his fault. He'd like to play with us —it's his ma. Why, she don't even let him go to Sunday school to his *dear Aunt Bella!*

HERBIE

You better not talk about Miss Bella! I think she's great!

CHARLIE

You ain't the only one. Why'd we come here to-night, if it wasn't for her?

MARK

Let's get started. You fellows know your parts? I'm not so dead sure about mine.

ERNEST

[*Braggingly.*] I could say mine backwards —in the middle of the night.

BERNIE

You've got a cinch part.

LOUIS

I don't know; I'd rather be anybody than old Antiochus. Wasn't he fierce?

SAMMY

[*Proudly.*] Judas puts an end to him all right. Come, boys, let's start up.

[*They take off their overcoats quietly, disclosing* SAMMY *as* ANTIOCHUS *in kingly robes,* HARRY *as* MENELAUS, *the high priest, and the other boys in the worn, ragged costumes of the Maccabees.*

MARK

Isn't it awful to have to act here without scenery? It's going to be simply grand in Sunday school. [*Announcing dramatically.*]

First Scene: Jerusalem, "Menelaus and Antiochus."

Second Scene: Modin, "Mattathias and His Five Sons."

Third Scene: Tabac, "Death-bed of Antiochus."

BERNIE

[*Longingly.*] I wish I was Judas! He's got 'em all beat a mile.

PHILIP

[*Sitting up suddenly.*] I can't keep quiet any longer! Say, what's all this? [*Looks at* MOLLY.] She'll be awake in a minute, and that'll be the end. Let's take her into the next room. You help, boys, and it'll be easy.

LOUIS

Who wants a *nurse* anyway?

[*They all together lift the chair deftly and easily, and in a minute have hustled* MOLLY, *still sleeping, into the next room.*

PHILIP

[*Running back to the sofa, delightedly.*] Do hurry, boys, because mamma'll be home any minute, and that'll be the end of it all.

HARRY

All right, we'll hustle. We're only glad you'll let us. See, we got to get this play in shape by Sunday, and nobody's got a house big enough to practice in.

[*They look at each other sheepishly, as if anxious to keep a secret.*

PHILIP

O, I'm crazy to see the play. I don't think mamma would take me.

CHARLIE

Come, fellows, you're out of the first part. Just Harry and Sammy. Curtain rises on them, you know.

PHILIP

You can wait in the next room, if you want to, till your turn.

BERNIE

No, sir, we can't afford to miss a word.

[*They all group themselves around* PHILIP *on the couch, while* HARRY *and* SAMMY *take their positions, center stage.*

KING ANTIOCHUS (*Sammy*)

[SAMMY *sitting stiffly on a high-backed chair,* MENELAUS *bowing before him.*] Come hither, Menelaus, I would confer with thee anent the Judeans.

MENELAUS (*Harry*)

I pray, your Majesty, I would not trouble your Highness with the errors of your unfaithful subjects.

ANTIOCHUS

[*Angrily.*] Unfaithful again, you say? There shall be an end to them. I have enough of this treason.

MENELAUS

Yes, your Majesty, they mock and scoff at you!

ANTIOCHUS

They mock at me, you say? They preach rebellion from Jerusalem? [*Strutting up and down.*] I shall teach them a pretty lesson. I shall pour the blood of unclean animals upon their altars and their sacred vessels!

MENELAUS

[*Rubbing his hands gleefully.*] But no! Deliver them to me, your Majesty. I shall make them give up their Torah, their Jewish rites and customs. Your Majesty, they mock at me too. I hate them as much as you do.

ANTIOCHUS

But I can trust you, Menelaus? Many dogs of Jews have betrayed their kings before now.

MENELAUS

Did I not steal the treasures of the temple for your Majesty? Have I not already delivered your enemies into your hands, the Hasidim and the Judeans? And to-day I have a most elaborate plan—

ANTIOCHUS

[*Sitting in pensive thought.*] What is it, Menelaus? Nothing can be too violent for these traitors. My wish is to exterminate them, to wipe them out completely. My mercenaries await my word, my troops will go over the kingdom destroying the infidels.

MENELAUS

[*Cunningly.*] Ah, your Majesty! But why destroy them, when we can make of them good Greek subjects? They will not give up their lives for their religion. You have merely to send your soldiers with the torch to their homes; you will soon see them give up their faith.

ANTIOCHUS

Would that I could believe you! But you are high priest, priest of the temple in Jerusalem. Why should I believe that you would truly change the religion of your followers? Most probably you will deliver me over to them.

MENELAUS

Ah! But, your Majesty, I desire to be high priest in the temple of the *Greeks*, and have hundreds, nay, thousands of followers. Give me the power to command your mercenaries, and in one month I shall have every Jew in your kingdom a good and loyal Greek.

ANTIOCHUS

[*Extending his scepter.*] I give you the power, Menelaus. Your life will be the forfeit,

if I find that you commit any act of treachery and betray me to my enemies. The wicked Jews shall be made to bow before the great god Zeus. Their homes shall be ransacked, their temple destroyed, yea, even their Holy of holies shall reek with the fat of swine. And you, Menelaus, you shall do it, you the councillor, the friend, the help of Antiochus, shall become the high priest of the Greeks!

MENELAUS

[*Dropping upon one knee.*] Your Majesty, I thank you! Once again I shall have the chance to serve you. Once again I shall taste power and glory! And [*rising*] the temple of the god Zeus shall be crowded, the throng of Jews shall not worship the Almighty. I shall see their faces respond to the call of our trumpets. Judaism shall perish, and Antiochus shall be king of the world.

ANTIOCHUS

And Menelaus his prime minister! [*Laying his hand upon his shoulder.*] One word I would say to thee—beware of Judas!

MENELAUS

[*Fiercely.*] Death to Judas and the Hasmoneans!

SAMMY

[*Taking off his crown, and going over to the boys.*] I guess I didn't do a thing to those lines. Didn't know I could do 'em so well myself.

PHILIP

[*Wistfully.*] It was grand! If I could only be in it! Is Antiochus really going to do all that to the poor Jews?

HARRY

[*Laughing.*] No, no! It's all a play, but [*seriously*] it was much worse than that. We kids ought to be mighty glad we didn't live in those days.

CHARLIE

[*Rising proudly.*] Wait till you see my part! I'm the *hero!* I'm *Judas!* I'm the whole show! Say, Phil, do you know your mamma and all the rest of the people are at temple to-night just because of what I did thousands of years ago?

HERBIE

[*Putting on a white wig.*] Well, I like that! Don't you think Mattathias had some little thing to do with it?

MARK

And I may be only Simon, but I helped too. I guess we'd all better get a move on, or the Hanukkah services will be over!

[HERBIE, MARK, ERNEST, LOUIS, *and* BERNIE *all go to stage center.* HERBIE, *weak and faltering, sits in the chair, while the others, except* CHARLIE, *group themselves about.* CHARLIE *waits a little to one side.*

MATTATHIAS (*Herbie*)

Alas, my sons! We have fallen upon troublous times! The hand of the betrayer is turned against us. You must avenge the God of your fathers.

SIMON (*Mark*)

But, alas, we have no armies! You, our fathers, have spent your strength. The hand of Menelaus, the high priest, is turned against us, we dare not worship in the temple.

JOHANAN (*Ernest*)

It is only yesterday that Lysias himself, once a friend of Menelaus, but now flown to the altar

for protection, was slain in the house of God. Alas! What can we do when our own priest has turned against us?

ELEAZAR (*Louis*)

And they say in Jerusalem that Menelaus will stop at nothing. He plans to convert all the Jews to the Greek religion, and Antiochus has promised to make Menelaus priest of his own temple.

JONATHAN (*Bernie*)

And they have found out our haunts in the hills. We must seek new fighting grounds. We can no longer fight from ambush.

MATTATHIAS

You must not despair, my sons. The great God of Israel watches over all His children. Antiochus shall not conquer while Mattathias and his five sons live to carry the shield of the Almighty.

JONATHAN

Alas, father, we have no prophet in Israel! If we but had an Isaiah among us! Then we could rejoice and be stout of heart.

MATTATHIAS

[*Rising and speaking in a trembling voice.*] And do you despair, my sons, because Isaiah is dead? I will get you the word of another, another prophet in Israel, a man who has foreseen not only our present but our future: who sees, as in a dream, our sufferings, our torture, our final triumph—— [*He opens his worn, old coat carefully and extracts a treasured volume.*] This is the Book of Daniel, inspired by the Lord and animated by the spirit of prophecy. Herein doth the wise man rejoice and foresee the triumph of Israel.

SIMON

[*Reaching out his hand for it eagerly.*] Would you entrust it to me, father? If we could only read it to our people, perhaps on a night before we go to battle, I am sure it will lead us to victory.

ELEAZAR

[*Gloomily.*] Alas! Yes, I fear Israel has fallen on evil times.

MATTATHIAS

My sons, my sons! You must not speak like this. The God of Israel fainteth not, nor is He weary.

JUDAS (*Charlie*)

[*Rushing in elated.*] Courage! Hope, my brothers—praised be the God of Israel!

MATTATHIAS

[*Embracing him.*] Judas, my son—the leader of his people. My children, you bear witness that this day I call Judas the leader of his people.

JUDAS

[*Bowing his head.*] Father, I thank you!

MATTATHIAS

Judas, in your veins flows the blood of many centuries of warriors. Your brain is filled with fervor, your heart with faith. You alone can lead Israel to victory, and the tramp of the tyrant will go out of the land forever!

JOHANAN

[*A bit protestingly.*] But, father, is not Simon our oldest brother?

MATTATHIAS

True, Simon is my first-born, and he has the soul of the wise man. Simon shall be your guide, your adviser, your councillor; Judas, your military leader.

JUDAS

But you, father, you will be with us many years to lead and guide us.

MATTATHIAS

[*Sinking exhausted on a chair.*] My children, I hear often the voice of the spirit. I fear it will not now be many months before I leave you. Judas, Simon, and the Book of Daniel must sweep you on to victory.

JUDAS

[*His head high, his shoulders thrown back.*] Victory! Listen, rumors gather in the market-place. Menelaus, not content with waging war against his brothers, would now force them to accept the religion of the Greeks. If we do not accept their faith, we perish; already Antiochus has desecrated our altars and our ark. At the very entrance to their cave of refuge he slaughtered the Hasidim. Are we cowards that we, with red blood in our veins, should suffer this to continue? What is our life, our breath, our naked strength, if not for the conquest of our enemy? Should we want to live without our religion? the dear God of our fathers? I call upon you, my brothers—now is the time—to-day

the very hour when we should give our breath and strength and hope to the conquest of the tyrant!

ALL

[*With great fervor.*] We trust you, Judas. You shall lead us to victory!

SIMON

[*Holding up the book.*] Judas and the Book of Daniel!

JUDAS

[*Taking it eagerly.*] The Book of Daniel —Just what my soldiers need—Long have they cried for a prophet in Israel—Long have they thirsted for an inspired word—With this I can strengthen their faith in the Almighty!

ALL

[*Drawing their swords.*] You lead, Judas, we follow!

MATTATHIAS

One word more! Beware, my sons, fight not in the open. Seek the hills and the secret hiding-places. Remember that you are few, though stout of heart; they are many and powerful.

JUDAS

[*Still inspired.*] Yes, many and powerful! But, father, the good God must watch over us, for our secret places are discovered, our caves and hiding-places watched. From now on we must fight in the open. A few leagues away the Judeans await us—await our coming. Armed with a greater faith than we have ever had, they must follow us into the very stronghold of the enemy. The Book of Daniel will light our way, and the good God of Israel deliver our enemy into our hands.

ALL

You lead! We follow!

[*All rush out with great enthusiasm.*

MATTATHIAS

[*Left alone with bowed head.*] My sons, I pray for you!

PHILIP

[*After a few moments' silence.*] Oh, but that was wonderful! Charlie, it must be great to be Judas. I only wish that mamma would let me have a try.

CHARLIE

You really liked it? Honest? I think I was pretty good myself.

PHILIP

[*Eagerly.*] Liked it! Will you let me shake your hand?

[CHARLIE *shakes his hand sheepishly.*

HARRY

But, Phil, we've got another scene. You wait for that. I believe it's the grandest of all.

SAMMY

Here's where old Antiochus "gets his." Got another chair for me to lie down on?

PHILIP

[*Eagerly.*] Take the sofa—O, please, hurry, hurry.

[*They all push the sofa, stage center.* SAMMY *lies down on it,* HARRY *and* CHARLIE *wait a little to the rear. The rest group themselves about* PHILIP, *listening eagerly.*

ANTIOCHUS

[*Lying on the sofa and groaning.*] And I am left alone to die! Egypt is in ruins, and Persia desolate. Gone is my pomp, my power, my glory! My mercenaries desert me, my courtiers forget me. All Israel mocks me. They jeer at

me, and rejoice in my defeat. [*Almost in delirium.*] Menelaus, the traitor, for whom I have done everything, even he deserts me in the hour of my need.

MENELAUS

[*Enters hurriedly, holding his arm as if wounded.*] Alas, your Majesty! I have no good news. The God of Israel is triumphant!

ANTIOCHUS

[*Resting on his elbow.*] Wait, you dog of a Jew! You to whom I have given power and wealth unlimited, have you too failed?

MENELAUS

[*With head bowed.*] Judas is a mighty force, he pursues me like death. Wherever I go, there he is before me. He is armed with the power of the Lord; I cannot resist his onslaughts.

ANTIOCHUS

But did you not destroy their temple, spread the blood of swine upon their altars? What force can they have left? What is this Book of Daniel?

MENELAUS

[*Snarling with rage.*] Alas! it comes from Mattathias, the father of the Hasmoneans. With

Judas to lead them and the Book to give them faith, the Jews are invincible.

ANTIOCHUS

Bah! The Jews! The Jews! Can I never get rid of them, wipe them out forever? My armies advance against them, my mercenaries slaughter them, and still the God of Israel lives, bah!

MENELAUS

[*Bowing his head in despair.*] Yes, the God of Israel lives!

[SIMON *steps forward quickly with the transparent fire-screen, which makes an improvised veil, behind which Judas takes his station, and begins to speak in a low, sepulchral voice. At first* ANTIOCHUS *does not seem to hear. Then, half-frightened, he turns on his elbow, but being crazed and half-delirious, he pictures Judas as the voice of conscience, which in reality he is. To the dying man the voice is but a figment of the brain.*

JUDAS

The God of Israel lives—

ANTIOCHUS

The voice of Judas? the voice of Judas—

[*He crouches in fear, and* MENELAUS *cowers at the foot of the couch, he too fearing to look up.*

JUDAS

[*Continuing as if he had not heard.*] The God of Israel lives and watches over all his children—watches and guards them well. You, Menelaus, the traitor, and you, Antiochus, the tyrant, will be food for the worms and rotting under the ground many, many years, while the God of Israel and His children will continue down into the centuries—

[*As* JUDAS *holds his sword aloft, and* ANTIOCHUS *and* MENELAUS *crouch in agony,* AUNT BELLA, DOCTOR SLESINGER, *and* MRS. BECKMAN *stand watching in the doorway, the last restrained with difficulty by the doctor.* MOLLY *stumbles into the opposite door, rubbing her eyes sleepily. The boys do not notice them, but as* JUDAS *is about to continue,* PHILIP *rushes over to him and grasps his arm excitedly.*

PHILIP

O, Judas, you're just wonderful. I want to be a warrior too—and fight old Antiochus—Please, please, won't you let me help to fight for Israel?

CHARLIE

[*Turning shamefacedly and seeing* MISS BELLA *in the doorway.*] Is it all right, Miss Bella? May Phil help too?

BELLA

[*Hurrying over.*] Does he *want* to fight for Israel?

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Hurrying over.*] My poor darling! I'm sure all this has been too much for you.

PHILIP

[*Pushing her away excitedly.*] But, mamma, I'm not sick. I only want to be a soldier and fight the old Greeks—another Judas, mamma.

DOCTOR SLESINGER

[*To* AUNT BELLA.] Even Mrs. Beckman must see how successful your prescription is.

CHARLIE

[*Anxiously, as* MISS BELLA *pats his head.*] I did Judas just as well as ever I could.

PHILIP

Oh, and I do so want to help him, if you'll only let me be a Has-mo-ne-an.

BELLA

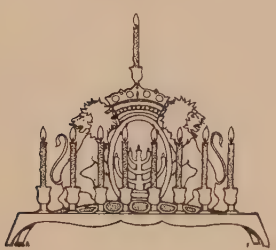
Ask your mother, Philip.

MRS. BECKMAN

[*Hesitating, then looking around at the eager faces of the little boys and the glowing face of little* PHILIP, *as she nods assent.*] Another—— little——Judas.

[*The boys all crowd around, eagerly welcoming* PHILIP.

CURTAIN



TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY

TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY

CHARACTERS

ANSELME KOCH, *a middle-aged wine-grower.*
THÉRÈSE, *his wife.*
PHILIPPE, *their oldest son, aged sixteen.*
MARIE, *their oldest daughter, aged fifteen.*
ANNETTE, LOUIS, GASTON } *their younger children.*
M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD, *the village shoemaker.*
MAMZELLE WERTHEIM, *the village dressmaker.*
CHICON, *the village loafer.*

TO SAVE HIS COUNTRY

THE TIME.—*About four-thirty in the afternoon before Pesah, April, 1816.*

THE PLACE.—*The little village of Rochefort in the southern part of France.*

DISCOVERED AT RISE OF CURTAIN.—Mother Koch *freshening a bit of lace at her throat the while she superintends the preparing of the Seder tray by* Marie *and* Annette. Marie *is arranging water-cress next to salt-water or vinegar; she also places an egg on a plate, and adds the dish of Haroses, a paste of almonds, raisins, and cinnamon chopped fine and mixed with wine.* Mrs. Koch *places a napkin on a plate. The plate contains three Matzos, each covered separately. Horseradish and parsley are already on the tray, and a shank-bone of lamb is on the table. Little* Gaston

is on his knees before the fire. The room is garnished and bright; a cheerful fire burns in the grate; the bits of old silver and pewter on the dresser glisten with a holiday gleam, and not a crumb of either bread or matzoh is to be found about the room. The table is laid with snowy linen, center right; places are set for eleven or twelve; the two added chairs for the "stranger." Wine and matzos are on the table, and a large silver cup, "the cup of Elijah," stands upon the dresser. Near at hand is the Seder tray, and on a hook near the door, right next the door-jamb, hangs a wire "matzoh cage." In the cage is a piece of matzoh from the Seder of the year before, a piece of the Afikomen. This custom of the cage is peculiar to certain parts of France and Germany; and the matzos in the cage are not supposed to be disturbed from year to year, until the search for leaven the night before the Seder service.

MRS. KOCH

Chérie, we must hurry. Only half an hour till the Pesah eve, and there is much yet to be done.

MARIE

[*Arranging the tray deftly.*] Je sais, maman, and I try hard to have everything so pretty. Remember, maman mignonne, what a wonderful Seder we had last year?

MRS. KOCH

[*Wiping a sudden tear.*] Ah, chérie, do I remember? Shall I ever forget? The wine—all the good things Sister Marie sent us? And my Philippe—my big boy—when he stands and drinks a toast to the God of Israel and France—shall I ever forget?

MARIE

[*Running to comfort her.*] Do not, maman mignonne—I pray of you—it makes us all so sad to see you weep. I am quite, quite sure nothing has happened to our Philippe.

MRS. KOCH

[*Still tearful.*] Alas, my pride! My first-born! He sat there— [*she points dramatically*] right opposite me, all through the Seder service. How his beautiful eye met mine! And then, in the night, he went away—just one year ago to-night—and in all that time, not one word.

MARIE

[*Still petting her.*] Maman mignonne, do not think about it. The dear Lord will take care of him, I am quite sure.

MRS. KOCH

[*Bowing her head.*] My little boy——

GASTON

See the big stick! It burn, it burn!

MARIE

[*Hurrying to him.*] And you with it. Away! [*As she draws him from the fire and takes him to one side, inspecting him for the services.*] Now, Gaston, run, wash your hands —such a little black boy—and you, Annette——

ANNETTE

[*Holding aloft a piece of parsley.*] I make a big bouquet.

MARIE

Yes, chérie, but Annette must too have pretty hands. Now hurry.

MRS. KOCH

[*Pulling herself together.*] Oui, oui, my darlings. The Seder, the Pesah eve!

LOUIS

[*Rushing in and waving an old tin horn.*] O, maman, maman, such great big soldiers. Guns on top of their arms. I *feeled* of one of them!

MRS. KOCH

[*Trying to be stern.*] Come here, enfant, didn't maman tell you to come right home from school? So much for my little son to do! Tomorrow there will be no work at all.

LOUIS

But, maman, so many big men in the square!

[MRS. KOCH *is busy at the table and only half hears.*

MARIE

Come quick, Louis, chéri, and let sister brush your hair.

LOUIS

[*As he plunges his head into the wash-bowl*

in the corner of the room.] I big enough to fix it myself— [*reminiscently*] with guns!

MARIE

[*Trying not to smile.*] Come, bébé.

[*Brushes and combs* ANNETTE'S *hair softly.*

MRS. KOCH

[*Glancing around the room.*] You think everything is finished, Marie?

MARIE

Just everything. Maybe except that——

[*Points to the matzoh-cage hanging near the door.*

MRS. KOCH

Oh, that! Papa surely did that all last night when he went over the house. Papa never forgets any of the places in the hometz-batteln. I wonder what is keeping papa? Schul should be over by this time!

[*In looking about the room she leaves a plate of matzos, quite forgetfully, on a chair underneath the matzoh-cage and near the door.*

LOUIS

I saw papa [*sheepishly*]. He didn't see me. M'sieu Chériot stopped him and talked about the frost.

ANNETTE

I want to see the frost.

MARIE

Hush, dear, we do not go out on Erev-Pesah.

LOUIS

Well, I wish nobody would come. We'd have so much more to eat.

MAMZELLE WERTHEIM

[*An emaciated old maid stands absorbing the last words on the threshold.*] Dieu, Madame Koch, I'd better go right home.

MARIE

[*Running to her and taking her shawl.*] O Mamzelle, Louis is only a little boy.

MRS. KOCH

[*With dignity.*] You are welcome, Mamzelle. Will you have the seat near the fire?

MAMZELLE

Fire! Must I be cold? [*She plumps down on the chair with the matzos, while the children begin to giggle.*] I'm sorry, Madame Koch, if I seem to——

[*As she rises quickly.*

MARIE

[*Running to brush up the crumbs.*] Never mind, Mamzelle, you didn't see——

MRS. KOCH

Be sure to get them *all* swept up, Marie.

MARIE

Of course, maman. And now, if you will only get your fresh pretty cap, everything will be quite ready.

MRS. KOCH

[*To* MAMZELLE, *who is still standing stiffly, nose in air.*] If you will excuse me, Mamzelle?

[*She exits into the next room.*

MAMZELLE

[*Running to the table and peering at the food.*] Not near so much as last year!

MARIE

Alas, no! Crops have been so bad——

LOUIS

[*Chiming in.*] And oui, we haven't so much money, since Philippe is away.

ANNETTE

[*Quite unexpectedly.*] And Aunt Marie, she forget all about us—no presents at all.

MAMZELLE

What I *always* say: "When you're down, you're down."

MARIE

O, no, Mamzelle. You mustn't think Aunt Marie has forgotten us. She has just a little superstition. So much she sent us last year—a lovely Seder basket—and that night Philippe went away. I think Aunt Marie a little bit blames herself.

MAMZELLE

[*Sharply.*] I'd like to know what that has to do with it. I was here that night too. You might as well accuse me.

MARIE

You don't understand, Mamzelle. Aunt Marie believes that Philippe knew she would always do so much for us—he didn't worry so about leaving.

MAMZELLE

[*In a tone of finality.*] You forget. Philippe always *was* headstrong, and headstrong is headstrong, say I, right up to the end.

MARIE

[*Deeply hurt.*] O Mamzelle, Philippe is an *angel!*

MAMZELLE

[*Sniffing contemptuously.*] An angel that wanted to try his wings in a big, bad city.

MARIE

[*Pleadingly.*] Dear Mamzelle, I beg of you, do not mention Philippe to-night. You may say all you want to me, but before maman——

[*Pauses as* MRS. KOCH *enters slowly, smoothing a pretty lace cap.*

MAMZELLE

[*Sniffling.*] And so I'm to keep my mouth closed?

MRS. KOCH

[*Softly.*] What is it, Mamzelle? I hope Marie has said nothing to hurt you?

MARIE

[*Hastily.*] My little maman, she look so charmant. If papa would *only* come! Everything is ready.

[*She holds up the Seder platter to prove her skill in decoration.*

ANNETTE

[*Reaching up her little hands for it.*] I'm *so* hungry——

LOUIS

Bébé——

MAMZELLE

[*Sweetly.*] Children and fools, you know.

ANSELME KOCH

[*A little middle-aged man hurries in, dressed in his Shabbes clothes. He walks with a cane*

and is very busy chatting to M'sieu Rothschild.] I am sorry, Thérèse dear, I've kept you waiting.

Mrs. Koch

Waiting only for you! Go, Anselme dear, and bring the Haggodah. Hurry, or we shall be late with the Seder.

Anselme

[*Hurrying into the next room, after he has pinched little* Louis' *ruddy cheeks.*] I will, my dear, in a haste—in a haste.

M'sieu Rothschild

[*Bowing low to* Mrs. Koch.] Bon soir, Madame Koch. It is so good of you to ask me to the Seder. I always say, what with no Rabbi in Rochefort and no Pesah services, one could easily forget his devotions, were it not for good Madame Koch. Aren't you happy to be here, Mamzelle Wertheim?

[Mrs. Koch *meanwhile has been shaking his hand and making him welcome.*

Mamzelle

[*Sniffling.*] Of course. Isn't it only a Pesah that makes you know I'm alive?

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

[*Gallantly.*] A shoemaker must stick to his last, you know; and the shoes around Rochefort give me little time for the ladies, alas!

MAMZELLE

[*Sighing.*] Wish I could say the same for the dresses.

MARIE

[*Quickly.*] But to-night is the night when we have no troubles, is it not, maman?

MRS. KOCH

[*Petting* MARIE.] Oui, mignonne. [*To the others.*] Haven't I a little comfort?

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

[*Gallantly.*] A little darling, I should say.

MARIE

[*Embarrassed, begins to count the chairs.*] Let us see. One, two, three—come, chéris, you're to sit next to sister, and— [*slyly*] you, Mamzelle Wertheim, next to M'sieu Rothschild, unless you object?

MAMZELLE WERTHEIM

[*Grudgingly.*] Perhaps I can endure it—once a year.

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

[*Edging nearer to her.*] I could, oftener.

MRS. KOCH

Have we surely enough places, Marie—same as last year? Ah, no, Chicon is not here, nor—nor Philippe——

MARIE

[*Hurriedly.*] But I have two extra places, maman—for the stranger, you know.

CHICON

[*A good-natured fat boy, the village loafer, comes lounging in at the door.*] A-ha, Miss Marie, and a good heart she has. She don't forget her old Chicon!

MARIE

[*Hastening to him, followed by the children, who climb over him with great affection.*] Welcome, Chicon. I knew *he* would come.

ANNETTE

[*Clambering into his pockets.*] Pesah candies, Chicon?

GASTON

But where's our doggie-woggie, Chicon?

CHICON

[*Emptying his pockets of candy.*] You think your old Chicon forget you? But he cannot bring his old Napoléon to a Seder service.

MAMZELLE

[*Horrified.*] You call your beast—Napoléon.

CHICON

[*As he makes a deep bow and flourishes his ragged cap.*] My emperor, and my faithful dog—my two dear ones! Vive Napoléon!

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

[*Echoing with great feeling.*] Vive Napoléon!

FATHER KOCH

[*Entering quickly with outstretched hand.*] Welcome, Chicon—happy to see you! Seder would not be Seder without you. Come, my

guests! Thérèse, Marie, it is time for our services.

[*All gather around the table and take the places assigned to them.* FATHER KOCH *repeats the Kiddush, or Sanctification. Then* FATHER KOCH *says:*

"This is the bread of affliction which our ancestors ate in the land of Egypt: let all who are hungry, enter and eat thereof."

GASTON

"Why is this night distinguished from all other nights?"

FATHER KOCH

"Because in Egypt we were slaves unto Pharaoh; and the Lord, our God, delivered us with a strong hand."

[*The order of the service follows, the stage director may use as much or as little as he sees fit or thinks is consistent with dramatic action: Narration of the story of Passover; Dayenu; breaking the unleavened bread; eating the bitter herb with Haroses; eating bitter herbs and matzoh; Seder tray is removed; serving the meal.*

ANNETTE

[*As the first course of hard-boiled eggs is passed.*] O—h! I love hard-boiled eggs!

GASTON

Why don't we have Pesah oftener?

CHICON

If I had anything to say, it would be every day.

LOUIS

[*Helping himself.*] As good as a picnic!

MAMZELLE

[*Aside.*] Little gluttons!

CHICON

[*Catching her up.*] Big ones, too! [*As the Matzoh-Klös reach him.*] And always will be while there are Matzoh-Klös. [*Poising one on a fork.*]

FATHER KOCH

I am ready, Marie.

[MARIE *brings the Seder tray, and* FATHER KOCH *says grace, at least one verse.*

MARIE

[*Handing her father a silver cup.*] Here is Elijah's cup, father.

LOUIS

[*As he watches his father filling the cup.*] Father, let me open the door!

[*Runs to open it.*

FATHER KOCH

Open it wider, my son, so that the wanderer may see our light and enter.

MRS. KOCH

M'sieu, will you lead the Hallel?

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

Gladly!

[*Sings Hodu la-Adonoi with the traditional Passover melody, the others joining in.*

MAMZELLE

[*As soon as they have finished and are sitting carelessly around the table.*] Where is *your* wanderer, Father Koch? Have you never heard from Philippe?

MARIE

[*Anxiously.*] O—oh! Mamzelle——

FATHER KOCH

[*Devoutly.*] My son is safe in the keeping of the Almighty.

MAMZELLE

[*Not to be deflected.*] But isn't it strange that he should never write at all?

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

[*Kindly.*] You may depend upon it, Koch, the boy has some good reason of his own.

MARIE

Whatever it is, it's *good.*

CHICON

Ah, the boy had the big desire, the great desire —to see the large world outside of little Rochefort.

MAMZELLE

And so he couldn't write——

FATHER KOCH

[*With head bowed.*] I beg of you, don't speak of him; he has broken my heart.

MRS. KOCH

[*Comfortingly.*] Mais oui, Anselme, all will come right. Philippe is but a boy. I remember as it was yesterday—how he poured the wine.

MAMZELLE

[*Under her breath somewhat.*] Oui, oui—and how he *drank* the wine!

FATHER KOCH

[*Head still bowed.*] My boy! My boy!

CHICON

[*Angrily to Mamzelle.*] Nonsense, the boy was a fine boy! Everybody must sweep before his own door!

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

I stake my whole reputation: Philippe has never done a bad thing in his little life.

LOUIS

[*Overcome with the thought of what he did to-day.*] I was bad, I was. I watched the soldiers in the square.

FATHER KOCH

[*Interested.*] Did you say soldiers, Louis, soldiers? I heard nothing of them.

MRS. KOCH

But, Anselme, we are forgetting the Afikomen. You did forget it, not so? I mean the piece you always put in the matzoh-cage—the piece for next year.

FATHER KOCH

[*Contritely.*] You are right, Thérèse, I did forget.

LOUIS

[*Excitedly.*] May I lift down the matzoh-cage?

FATHER KOCH

[*Smiling.*] Yes, or there will be no more Afikomen to put in.

LOUIS

[*As he lifts down the cage.*] O, look, it is all old and crumbly!

FATHER KOCH

[*Horrorstruck.*] I must have forgotten it, Thérèse. How came that? when I was searching the house last night.

MRS. KOCH

Are you sure, father, you forgot?

FATHER KOCH

[*As he takes the little cage.*] But oui, I suppose my mind was, as always, on the last Seder and Philippe rather than on the search and the hometz-batteln. [*As he opens the matzoh-cage.*] But look; here is a letter.

MRS. KOCH

[*Hand over her heart.*] Perhaps it is from ——— and we haven't opened that cage since last Seder.

FATHER KOCH

[*His hand trembling.*] You read it. I can't.

MRS. KOCH

I cannot either, my dear one, I cannot.

MARIE

Give it to me, dear father. I shall read it——

[*Opens and reads a worn, old piece of paper, while all listen in strained silence.*

My Dearest Ones:

To-night, this Pesah night, I leave you. I go to fight for my country. I could not tell you, my dear parents, I could not bear to see the grief upon your faces. My emperor has called me, and I go. I will come back when my country has no more need of me. Remember that I fight for you. Yours in love forever,

PHILIPPE.

[*A few moments of awestruck silence, then—*

MARIE

[*Clasping her hand.*] I felt it! I felt it! My big brother gone to fight for his country!

LOUIS

[*With awe.*] And a *real* gun on his shoulder——

ANNETTE

Will he be shooted—dead?

MRS. KOCH

[*Covering her face.*] My boy! Perhaps on a battlefield!

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

Would to Heaven I could so serve my country!

MAMZELLE

[*Drily.*] Well, he always *did* like fighting.

CHICON

[*Wildly.*] The greatest fight in all the world —the fight for his country!

MRS. KOCH

If we had only once touched the matzoh-cage during the year—or even you, yesterday—then should we have known——

CHICON

[*Wisely.*] And then would you have worried, every day, every minute, all the long year.

FATHER KOCH

"The Lord is good, His tender mercies are over all His works."

MARIE

[*Peering out towards the door.*] Away out there, in dust and smoke and battle; fighting like the great, brave heart he is—fighting for his country—— [*She stands transfixed with rapture as* PHILIPPE *approaches quietly and stands silent in the doorway. He is worn and travel-stained and carries a musket, whose weight at times causes him to limp. The company stare transfixed, except* MARIE, *who rushes to him and falls into his arms.*] Philippe——

PHILIPPE

My sister—— [*As soon as they have finished a warm embrace, he hurries to his mother and father.*] Mother! dear mother! Father! [*All embrace eagerly.*] Dear friends!

LOUIS

[*Excitedly feeling his gun.*] He has a gun! He has a gun! Just like I saw in the square to-day.

PHILIPPE

[*Hugging him.*] Ah, you saw them! [*Proudly.*] I belonged to them. Only they got here before me. [*Looking at the table joyfully.*]

And my place at the Seder table! I have tramped miles and miles to reach here to-night.

MAMZELLE

[*Sniffling.*] But just too late for Seder!

CHICON

[*Petting him.*] But not too late for us, Philippe. Rochefort has not been Rochefort without you!

M'SIEU ROTHSCHILD

[*Impressively.*] We are very proud to claim you, Philippe Koch.

MOTHER KOCH

[*Anxiously.*] Until to-night, until this moment, my Philippe, we did not know where you had gone. We thought perhaps you had——

MAMZELLE

[*Sharply.*] —run away.

PHILIPPE

You did not get my letter in the matzoh-cage?

MAMZELLE

[*Still sharply.*] You knew they touch it only once a year.

PHILIPPE

[*Turning from her to his mother.*] I did not want you to find it right away, dear mother. I did not want you to worry—— [*Pause.*] I left a prayer with God that you might find it soon afterwards.

MOTHER KOCH

[*Sadly.*] Ah! No, we did not. We heard nothing from you, my boy, all the long year.

FATHER KOCH

[*As his eye takes him in lovingly.*] My son! My little boy!

MARIE

Not a line, Philippe; not a word.

PHILIPPE

[*Grasping her hand.*] But you will understand, dear sister, when I tell you I was in a place where I couldn't write, [*with great impressiveness*] the Island of Elba.

ALL

[*Thunderstruck.*] Elba!

PHILIPPE

[*Slowly, as he lifts a glass of wine.*] Yes, with my emperor, my hero, my Napoléon!

ALL

[*With hushed, awestruck voices.*] Bonaparte!

CHICON

[*Rubbing his hands in great excitement.*] Tell us about it, Philippe, all about it—your old Chicon.

PHILIPPE

[*Looking around at the rapt faces.*] Everything?

CHICON

[*As they nod in assent.*] Everything! Oh that I should live to hear this tale! [*He rubs* PHILIPPE'S *coat sleeve reverently.*] He has been with our emperor.

MAMZELLE

[*Sniffling.*] A camp follower most likely.

FATHER KOCH

[*Glaring at her.*] Mamzelle, you forget yourself.

[*Only his hospitality prevents him from asking her to leave.*

MARIE

[*Adoringly.*] Please, hurry, Philippe. I can't wait.

PHILIPPE

[*Slumps, tired, into a chair. His gun falls to the floor with a clatter; little* LOUIS *runs to pick it up and hands it back, adoringly.*] I'm dead-tired.

MOTHER KOCH

[*Handing him bread and wine, which he eats at intervals while he talks.*] Dear Philippe——

PHILIPPE

[*Inspired by the eager faces around him, especially* CHICON'S.] You remember last Seder night—all of you?

ALL

[*Eagerly.*] Yes, yes.

PHILIPPE

You remember our sorrow over the abdication of our emperor?

ALL

Ah, oui.

PHILIPPE

How, on the sixth of April, he had signed the paper at Fontainebleau—the paper in which he forever resigned his right to be emperor of France? You remember our sorrow, our grief?

ALL

Ah, oui.

PHILIPPE

How we all mourned him, the great man! Who had given his life—his strength! Who had made France feared before the nations! Who had conquered Germany, Austria, Italy, only to be conquered at last by his own people!

FATHER KOCH

Alas! Too true.

PHILIPPE

You remember how he said on the roadside at Passy, in the dead of night: "If they had

showed courage but two hours longer, we might still have saved France?"

CHICON

[*Mournfully.*] Alas! Yes, too late! France was broken—her people in the dust.

PHILIPPE

[*With greater enthusiasm.*] "If they had showed spirit two hours longer!" That I could not forget. My emperor! my hero! Forced to abdicate because his soldiers could not show spirit two hours longer!

CHICON

[*Eagerly.*] So you went to help him?

PHILIPPE

[*Ecstatically.*] Yes, on Pesah night—while you all slept. I went at midnight. I walked and walked for days and days. I wanted to help my emperor, I wanted to save France.

MOTHER KOCH

[*Wiping her eyes, as* FATHER KOCH *pats her on the shoulder in an understanding of a boyish dream.*] My little child!

MAMZELLE

[*Under her breath.*] Little silly!

MARIE

[*Glaring at her.*] My brave brother!

LOUIS

[*Anxiously.*] Is he fat, Monsieur Napoléon?

PHILIPPE

[*As the others laugh.*] No; pale and thin. But let me tell you: When I reached Paris, it was only to find that I could do nothing. The army had been disbanded, just a few hundreds of his old soldiers were still remaining, and were allowed to go to Elba with him. I got taken on one of the ships as a sort of a sailor—helper——

MAMZELLE

[*Still under her breath.*] What did I say?

PHILIPPE

But to be near my emperor! To help him! To watch him study and plan and think! Soon after we reached Elba, I got taken on in the emperor's household. I did many things to help.

CHICON

Tell me, was he very lonely? Always sad?

PHILIPPE

Often, very. But he never gave up hope of saving France. And soon his mother came to stay with him.

LOUIS

[*Awestruck.*] Was she a regular old lady? A king's mother?

PHILIPPE

Very good and kind. She too never gave up hope of saving France.

MARIE

Oh, do tell us all about it!

PHILIPPE

So much! Napoléon was always meeting with his generals, his faithful friends. They were always planning. Then, one day in February, a young man came, I heard his name, Monsieur Fleury de Chabouillon. He came by way of Italy, and brought Napoléon news of the

discontent in France—of the terrible state of the army. From that day on the emperor was never the same.

M'sieu Rothschild

He felt his country's need.

Philippe

And his mother felt it too. My friend heard her say: "Go, my son, and may God protect you, as He has so many times protected you. You cannot remain here." [*He pauses.*] You all know the rest.

Chicon

[*With intense excitement.*] He saw the mother of Bonaparte! And you came back with him?

Philippe

[*Proudly.*] Did you think I would desert him?

Marie

[*Eagerly.*] What happened then?

Philippe

We put to sea—left Elba without knowing exactly where we were going. But I was always

with him, from the moment we left the island. When we sighted Cannes, reached Dauphiné, met the old soldiers of the famous Fifth—from the moment we reached Grenoble and the Gap, when we arrived at Sisteron, where every soldier and officer in the army bowed before him, through the days when we entered Fontainebleau, to the morning of March twentieth, when at dawn we reached Paris and the Tuileries.

M'sieu Rothschild

The Tuileries!

Father Koch

My son in the march to Paris!

Chicon

But why are you here now, my Philippe, with all France still uneasy—the fate of the empire depending upon Bonaparte's next move?

Philippe

[*Suddenly buries his head in sorrow; then speaks slowly.*] Alas! Do not ask me that. I could go no further; I was wounded.

MOTHER KOCH

[*Embracing him excitedly.*] Wounded? My Philippe——

PHILIPPE

Yes; but nothing serious—at Nîmes. You have heard about Nîmes?

MARIE

No details, Philippe.

PHILIPPE

You heard the Duc d'Angoulême rebelled? [*They shake their heads in ignorance.*] On the twenty-ninth of March he carried the Pont St. Esprit; on the thirtieth he reached Montelimar, and on April second he forced the bridge over the Drôme.

CHICON

And you were defending it?

PHILIPPE

Alas! that was where I was wounded. Only a small saber cut, but enough to make my captain see that I was too young and unfit for service. I was ordered home—and rest.

[*He buries his head again.*

M'sieu Rothschild

Alas that I am too old!

Chicon

And I too crooked!

Philippe

[*Still sobbing.*] And I had to leave when he needed me most. My Bonaparte!

All

[*Raising their glasses.*] Bonaparte!

Mother Koch

[*Hugging* Philippe *again.*] But, my darling, you have done nobly; you have given all your strength.

Marie

[*Thoughtfully.*] And you have been saved—to us.

Philippe

[*As if struck by a sudden thought.*] I never thought of that.

[*As* Marie *caresses him and* Mother Koch *bends over him tenderly,* Chicon *murmurs: "And he helped to save France."*

FATHER KOCH

[*Raising his wine-glass, and speaking in reverent tone.*] "And the Angel of Death passed over the houses of the children of Israel."

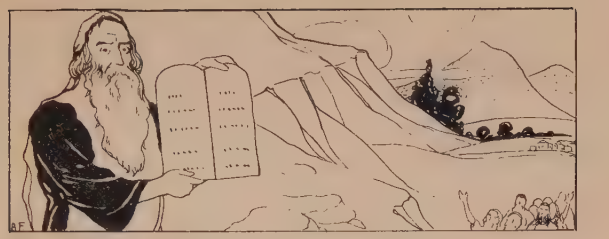
CURTAIN

AMBITION IN WHITECHAPEL

AMBITION IN WHITECHAPEL

CHARACTERS

JANET MAGNUS } *bosom friends, each about*
SOPHIE SWARTZ } *fourteen years old.*
MRS. MAGNUS, *Janet's mother.*
MRS. SWARTZ, *Sophie's mother.*
MR. MAGNUS, *Janet's father.*
MRS. LIVINGSTON, *Janet's friend.*



AMBITION IN WHITECHAPEL

THE TIME.—*About three o'clock of an afternoon, a pleasant day in April.*

THE PLACE.—*A very shabby living- dining-room, in back of Mr. Magnus's greengrocer shop in Whitechapel, London.*

The room is filled with the usual appurtenances of a shabby living- dining-room; on a table, to one side, is a bowl filled with unpeeled potatoes, a knife, and a loaf of bread. To rear of room is an old cabinet, or bureau, the bottom drawer of which is fitted with a key that locks it.

DISCOVERED AT RISE OF CURTAIN.—*Janet and Sophie stitching industriously at little blue gingham aprons for orphans. A few of the finished aprons lie to one side.*

SOPHIE

[*As she stitches a buttonhole.*] Wherever did you get the idea?

JANET

I didn't; Miss Bessie did. See, she knows how terrible I felt about——

[*Stops, unable to proceed.*

SOPHIE

[*Whispering.*] —not getting confirmed?

JANET

[*Nodding her head "yes."*] Please hand me a button.

SOPHIE

[*Who is having a bad time threading her needle.*] I—I guessed—Janey——

JANET

[*Avoiding the subject.*] You're awful good to help me. I'd never get finished if it wasn't for you!

SOPHIE

[*Needle poised in air.*] O Janey, if we can only make enough— [*Air of revelation.*] You know I just dream buttonholes!

JANET

And I buttons—whole armies of them. Last night a soldier with a button-head tried to stab my eyes out. Mamma said I hollered out loud to save me.

SOPHIE

[*Whispering again.*] Sure she doesn't know?

JANET

S—s—sh! And won't, if I can help it.

SOPHIE

But however do you hide them?

JANET

[*Running to the old cabinet and unlocking the bottom drawer; she then pulls a little apron out of it and holds it up.*] See—here. I've got 'em tucked way back. Mamma keeps hers and papa's very best things in here—their holiday clothes, and only opens it before they go to temple.

SOPHIE

But suppose she'd find out. Would you feel very bad?

JANET

[*Closing the drawer, locking it, and coming back.*] Would I? Why, you don't know how sad my mamma feels about my not having a dress. I heard her crying to papa the other day——

SOPHIE

[*With an air of conviction.*] Then I think it's your *duty* to tell her!

JANET

[*Excitedly.*] But listen, Sophy, if I can't make enough buttonholes, and don't earn *enough* money, I can't buy that dress, and I can't possibly get confirmed without a dress. So don't you think mamma'd feel worse to know I was trying and couldn't succeed, than if I hadn't tried at all?

SOPHIE

[*Slowly.*] No; I think she'd be proud. My mamma would, if I cared so much as you do to be confirmed that you work so hard, days and nights, and everything, just to earn a dress.

JANET

That's just it. I love studying about it so, and am so anxious to really be confirmed, that

she'd feel worse'n ever if I didn't earn *enough* to buy my dress even after working so hard.

SOPHIE

[*Convinced.*] Well, you can count on me. I'll never *breathe* it—even if I'm tortured. I'm just praying Mrs. Livingston will want *millions* of aprons!

JANET

So am I. Soon's we finish this one we'll go over for some more. See, she's to pay me to-day for what I've done, but I've just *got* to be home before five.

SOPHIE

Suppose your mamma comes in?

JANET

She won't. She always stays in the store till five; but I've got to get potatoes peeled and coffee on before then.

SOPHIE

[*Anxiously.*] Think maybe we'd better peel potatoes now?

JANET

Gracious, Sophy, we *can't.* I'm sure Mrs. Livingston told Miss Bess I'm to be there by four. She goes out driving then. And, O Sophy, she does live in such a gorgeous-us house!

SOPHIE

[*Excitedly.*] If they only let *me* in. I've been living for the minute when the man with the white wig opens the parlor doors!

JANET

[*Air of pride.*] Two white men with two white wigs and *four* white silk legs!

SOPHIE

[*Thunderstruck.*] Four white silk legs!

JANET

Yes, indeed! And last time Mrs. Livingston was *pouring tea* out of a gold tea-pot!

SOPHIE

[*More stunned than ever.*] A *gold* tea-pot! And she lets you come in the *front* door?

JANET

Yes, indeed, she *wants* me to. But it's so hard to believe they're all Jews, like us.

SOPHIE

You think the men with the white wigs are too?

JANET

[*Uncertainly.*] I don't know. They may just be good friends; but her visitors all are, I think. Last time a lady with funny gold eye-glasses that she held up in her hand kept staring at me as she said, "And so the little dear comes all the way from Whitechapel."

SOPHIE

Whitechapel?

JANET

Yes, just as if it was *Africa.* And then another one said, "You know, Ellen, I've *always* wanted to go down to that New Holloway Street Temple; we must some day."

SOPHIE

[*Disgustedly.*] Just as if it was a Zoo!

JANET

[*As she looks around the shabby room in a puzzled way.*] It's so hard to understand they're on the same earth we are. Don't you wonder why some people have velvet carpets and other people bare floors?

SOPHIE

[*Also puzzled.*] Or why some people have ten dresses when you have to work so hard for one?

JANET

[*Folding up three little aprons.*] But to be confirmed! Think of it, Sophie! [*Calculating.*] If I can *only* do five aprons a day and get ten pence apiece, in *ten* days more I'll have my *dress!*

SOPHIE

[*Jumping up excitedly.*] Let's hurry right over for the money. I'll wrap 'em up while you get the hats.

[*She wraps up the finished aprons in brown paper, while* JANET *puts the unfinished ones in bottom cabinet drawer, locks it carefully, puts key inside her shirtwaist, and snatches up two little round hats.*]

JANET

[*As she peers out side-door entrance, while Sophie is hastily gathering up every trace of their work.*] Come—coast's clear—let's hurry.

[*They hasten out. In a few moments,* MRS. MAGNUS, *as she wipes her hands on her large gingham apron, pushes open the door leading from the shop. She is followed by* MRS. SWARTZ, *who wears bonnet and shawl and looks about her eagerly.*]

MRS. MAGNUS

Sure, an' I can sit down a minute; come right in. Sophy and Janey 've been here an hour or so, quiet as two mice. Wonder what they're up to?

MRS. SWARTZ

Ach! They aren't here at all.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Looking around, calling, peering into other room.*] Janey, Janey, don't you hear mamma?

MRS. SWARTZ

And my Sophy; maybe they gone out to play?

MRS. MAGNUS

Not my Janey, never—unless perhaps she took your girl home a piece; but she's got so much to do.

[*Spies the bowl of unpeeled potatoes, and clears her throat expressively, as she pushes them a bit out of sight.*

MRS. SWARTZ

[*Seating herself comfortably in the rocker.*] Nun, your little girl is very good. My Sophy would carry on much worse if she could not be confirmed.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Also seating herself wearily, and wiping a surreptitious tear with the corner of her apron.*] My little lamb, we've had an awful year—never sure of the roof over our heads.

MRS. SWARTZ

Schrecklich! I'm glad my Jake went to America. He sends me money regularly, and in the summer we go out too.

MRS. MAGNUS

I guess we must do something too. Whitechapel ain't any more Whitechapel. What with

grog shops selling prawns, and vegetable carts huckstering fruit, how's a man to earn an honest living?

MRS. SWARTZ

[*Sympathetically.*] Ja, ja! and so many mouths——

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Still wiping her eyes.*] Yes, little Simon up at the baby farm. He took the money that was meant for Janey's dress.

MRS. SWARTZ

[*Sighing.*] If I only had it—but hardly enough for my Sophy. And such a liddle plain one. But don't you mind. Your Janey's got all the best of the teaching. My Sophy says she has the most brains in the class.

MRS. MAGNUS

What worries me is she's awful quiet about something—always hurry, hurry, hurry to get through with her work.

MRS. SWARTZ

You think maybe she's got more mind on that dress than you know about?

MRS. MAGNUS

Ah no, that's not my girl. Once she gives a thing up, an angel couldn't make her think of it again. It's somethin' else, and I'm that worried, I am.

MRS. SWARTZ

[*Rising hurriedly.*] Maybe she got my Sophy in it, now. Why do you think they stay out so long?

MRS. MAGNUS

Don't you worry. Janey's just took her a piece home.

MRS. SWARTZ

[*Worried as she hastens to the door.*] Your Janet's your Janet, and my Sophy's my Sophy. And when you've got only one little lamb, it's worse than if something happens to the apple of your eye!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Kindly as she sees her to the door.*] You'll find 'em down Paddington way, I'm sure. [*Calls after her.*] An' if you do, you'll be a-sendin' of my Janey right home?

MRS. SWARTZ

[*Voice from a distance.*] Ja, ja; of course.

[*As soon as she has gone,* MRS. MAGNUS *hurries over to the dish of unpeeled potatoes, and begins to scrape them, glancing anxiously at the clock every few minutes. In a short time* JANET *pushes the side-door open stealthily. She does not see her mother, so steps quietly inside, her hand behind her back.*

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Pausing, potato knife in air.*] Well, there, Janey. Come in and shut the door.

JANET

[*Dragging in slowly, and holding the package behind her back in the hope that her mother will not notice it.*] O, mamma——

MRS. MAGNUS

Where you been, Janey?

JANET

Just down the street a bit.

MRS. MAGNUS

And what you holding behind your back?

JANET

[*Bringing out the package.*] Something I'm —keeping—for Sophy.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Struck by the insincerity of her tone.*] Janet Magnus, don't you story to your mother. Hand me that package.

JANET

[*Clinging to it stubbornly.*] It's Sophy's.

MRS. MAGNUS

Funny Sophy can't keep her own package. You just left her?

JANET

Ye—es—

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Decidedly.*] Now, Janet, this's got to stop. You're not tellin' mamma the truth. That isn't Sophy's package, you hain't just left Sophy, and

what's more, you didn't do your tasks this afternoon——

[*Pauses as she points to the rest of the unpeeled potatoes.*

JANET

O, mamma, I thought I'd do them when I got back from——

[*Pauses, unable to proceed.*

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Drops the potato knife, crosses, and shakes* JANET'S *shoulder.*] From where, Janet Magnus, from where?

JANET

[*Sullenly.*] From taking Sophy home.

MRS. MAGNUS

If Sophy went right home, why didn't she take her own package? Janet, give me that package this very minute!

[JANET *clutches it tightly, but does not move.*

MRS. MAGNUS

Did you hear me, Janet? Give me that——

JANET

[*On the point of breaking down.*] O—O, mamma, don't make me!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Angrily.*] I'll not have you tellin' me stories and hidin' things—maybe wrong things from mamma, Janet; give me that——

[*Just as* JANET *is on the point of yielding it to her,* MR. MAGNUS, *a ruddy-faced greengrocer, also with large gingham apron, comes bursting in the door. He is tugging at his apron, in the effort to get it off.*

MR. MAGNUS

Well, wife—and Janey; your papa's got the big chance.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Noting the excitement in his manner, breaks off with* JANET, *who drops left rear, package still clutched tightly in hands behind her back.*] Whatever you mean, Sol?

MR. MAGNUS

[*So excited he can scarcely speak plainly.*] Maybe I get to go in on a big shop, up to Totten-

ham Court way. Max Spiegel just in here. Max says his boss is lookin' for a partner, nice gentleman partner, run his shop, and do the buyin' for him when he goes way. Got to take his wife to Wales, wife sick. Needs somebody what knows prawns, prawns and green goods. Now, you know me and prawns!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*With an excited air of pride.*] Yes, indeed, no better prawn man in the whole world, says I to Mrs. Swartz to-day.

JANET

[*Also excited.*] O papa, then we move up Tottenham Court way, and you make lots of money?

MR. MAGNUS

[*Kindly.*] Maybe, yes, perhaps; but don't count your chickens afore they're out of the egg. Maybe when I get there, the boss has already six partners.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Anxiously.*] You go right off?

MR. MAGNUS

Sure, Sadie, it ain't the lame horse what reaches the post first. And in my very best clothes, say I——

MRS. MAGNUS

'Course, I'll get them for you.

[*Starts for the cabinet.*

JANET

[*Intensely excited.*] They aren't in there, mamma.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Stops, thunderstruck.*] They ain't—since when? Haven't I *always* kept your father's Sabbath clothes here—never touch 'em except finest holidays and days like——

JANET

O, mamma dear, I'm just sure you moved 'em; don't you remember?

MR. MAGNUS

Let your ma alone, Janey, she knows where everything is.

[*He is busy taking things out of his trousers pockets.*

JANET

[*Almost frenzied as she sees her mother make for the bottom drawer.*] I tell you—they aren't there. I *moved* them!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Pausing aghast.*] *You* moved them! *You* moved papa's holiday clothes. Why, Janey, how *dared*——

JANET

[*Beginning to tremble and half-sob.*] Not—not exactly. I mean——

MR. MAGNUS

[*Sternly.*] What's all this about, Janey?

MRS. MAGNUS

Well, it's just good you ask her, Sol. Not a word can I get out of her.

JANET

[*Now sobbing unrestrainedly.*] O—O—mamma——

MRS. MAGNUS

I mean it. I never would 'a told your father, you know that; but it's just too much. Half your work you don't do——

MR. MAGNUS

[*More sternly.*] She don't, don't she?

JANET

O—O—mamma, only to-day——

MR. MAGNUS

[*Still sternly.*] What else?

MRS. MAGNUS

Stories to her mamma.

MR. MAGNUS

Tells *stories!*

MRS. MAGNUS

Well, you ask her about that package behind her back.

MR. MAGNUS

Come here, Janey. [*She obeys.*] Now give papa that package. [*She hands it over.*] But first you tell him what's in it.

JANET

[*Sobbing now so she can scarcely speak.*] I—I can't——

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Who has been trying the cabinet drawer.*] Locked! I declare. Janey, have *you* got the key?

MR. MAGNUS

Janey, where *is* that key?

JANET

[*Fishing it out from the inside of her shirt-waist.*] Here.

[*Is unable to go on.*

MR. MAGNUS

[*Beginning to open the package as* MRS. MAGNUS *unlocks the drawer.*] Now, Janey, you tell papa—— [JANET, *seeing she is about to be discovered, breaks down utterly, and rushes from the room.* MR. MAGNUS *pulls an apron out of the package and holds it up.*] Aprons!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Pulling several out of the drawer and holding them up also.*] Aprons! [*Both, too astounded to speak, can only stare at each other. After a few moments* MRS. MAGNUS *recovers her breath.*] Whatever are they for?

MR. MAGNUS

How should I know?

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Whispering.*] Do you think she could have——

MR. MAGNUS

[*In a tone of horror, and also whispering.*] —taken them?

MRS. MAGNUS

O, no—no—not my Janey, not my Janey.

MR. MAGNUS

[*As he takes a step towards the door.*] She'll *have* to tell me.

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*A charmingly dressed young woman stands in door of shop which* MR. MAGNUS *has left open.*] May I come in?

MRS. MAGNUS

You are——?

MRS. LIVINGSTON

Mrs. Livingston. No, you do not know me; but I've heard so much of you. I waited quite a while in the shop, and no one came.

MR. MAGNUS

Beg pardon, madam. Was you a-wantin' something?

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*Graciously.*] Only your daughter.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Thunderstruck.*] My little Janey?

MRS. LIVINGSTON

Your little Janey. May I speak to her a few moments?

MR. MAGNUS

[*Suspiciously and forgetting his politeness.*] What for?

MRS. MAGNUS

Ask the lady to sit down, Sol.

[*Dusts off a chair with her apron.*

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*Charmingly.*] Now, don't make me tell you, Papa Magnus. Little Janet and I have been having *such* a secret!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Alarmed.*] A *secret!* With a stranger, from her ma? Won't you tell us, Mrs. Livingston?

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*Coyly.*] But I promised——

MRS. MAGNUS

A secret from her ma——

[*Breaks down and begins to cry.*

MR. MAGNUS

You see how she takes it, Mrs. Livingston? Me and my wife just been having a bit of a scene with Janey——

MRS. LIVINGSTON

O, dear, I only hope it wasn't—— O, no, it couldn't have been about me and— [*seeing the aprons scattered around the floor*] about me and the aprons.

MR. AND MRS. MAGNUS

[*Amazed.*] *You* and the aprons!

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*Smiling.*] Yes, that's the secret. You see your little girl and I are joint members in a secret society. Object: confirmation dress.

MR. AND MRS. MAGNUS

Confirmation dress!

MRS. LIVINGSTON

Yes. Your dear little girl would not allow me to give her one. Her teacher and my friend, Miss Bess, told me that she was unable to be confirmed because she lacked a dress.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Head turned away.*] Yes—we couldn't——

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*Quickly.*] I understand—and that's why I was so happy to help her work for it.

MR. MAGNUS

[*His voice husky.*] Work for it!

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Softly.*] My Janey——

MRS. LIVINGSTON

Yes, the little dear! Stitching her fingers off making buttonholes on aprons for the orphans. Her last lot was to have been handed in this week, but I wanted to pay her for what she had already done.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Still clutching an apron.*] Aprons for the orphans!

MRS. LIVINGSTON

Unfortunately I had to be out when she came to-day. I told the maid to ask her to wait, but she said she hadn't time; merely left the aprons and took some new ones home. That's why I came right over to pay her. Now, may I see her for a moment?

MR. MAGNUS

[*Still a bit confused.*] Why—of course. [*Calls.*] Janet, Janet.

[*She doesn't answer, so he goes in to fetch her.*

MRS. LIVINGSTON

I'm *so* sorry, Mrs. Magnus, if all this has caused you any anxiety.

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Twisting her apron excitedly.*] If she'd only 'a told her ma.

[MR. MAGNUS *enters, dragging the still weeping* Janet.

MRS. LIVINGSTON

Why, Janet dear——

JANET

[*Timidly.*] Yes'm—I couldn't wait—I had to come home and fix potatoes——

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*Hurrying over and hugging her.*] Why, Janet dear, I didn't come to scold you, merely to pay——

MR. MAGNUS

[*Also petting her clumsily.*] But why didn't you tell your pa?

JANET

[*Looking up for the first time and seeing that he isn't angry.*] O—papa——

MRS. MAGNUS

[*Also crossing and patting her shoulder.*] And your mamma, Janey—why didn't you tell your ma?

JANET

[*A smile breaking through her tears.*] O, mamma, I just wanted to earn it all *alone.*

MRS. LIVINGSTON

[*As she pets her.*] And you have earned it, dearie—all alone.

JANET

[*Ecstatically, as if she saw it before her.*] My *confirmation dress—all alone!*

[*They cluster around her in loving sympathy.*

CURTAIN

BECAUSE HE LOVED
DAVID SO!

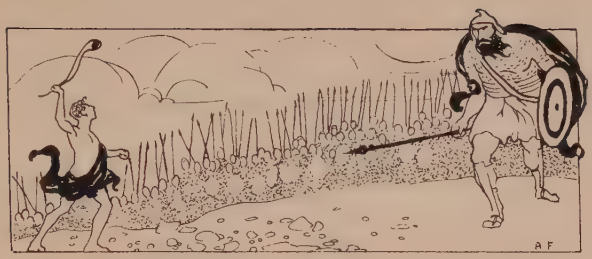
BECAUSE HE LOVED DAVID SO!

CHARACTERS

JOSEPH GOLDSTEIN, *owner of a clothing shop.*
ABRAHAM, *his thirteen-year old son.*
ISAAC, *his seven-year old son.*

HENRY JACOBS
CHARLIE STEINER
ARTHUR COHN
HARRY FRANK
SADIE MYERS
CLAUDIE ELSON
JANIE GARSON

children attending the Sunday school.



BECAUSE HE LOVED DAVID SO!

TIME.—*The present; a Sunday afternoon in June.*

PLACE.—*A narrow alley outside of Goldstein's clothing shop. A small town in Pennsylvania.*

DISCOVERED AT RISE OF CURTAIN.—Abie Goldstein *sitting disconsolate on the steps of the clothing shop. Head sunk in hands, he is idly watching little* Ikey *playing with an old cart-wheel. A Sunday stillness prevails everywhere, and the bare fronts of houses are not conducive to happiness in little* Abie. *The alley is narrow and meager, and from the humble frontage of the second-hand clothing shop one may easily judge that* Mr. Goldstein *is engaged in a hand-to-hand struggle with existence.*

ABIE

Aw, Ikey, forget your old cart-wheel. I want to tell you something.

IKEY

[*Having a grand time with the wheel.*] But I—want—to play—circus.

ABIE

[*Tone of awe.*] Didn't I tell you the cop'd get you—Sunday!

IKEY

What's Sunday?

ABIE

Day you got to keep quiet and think about your sins.

IKEY

[*Still puzzled.*] What's a sins?

ABIE

[*Cunningly.*] You just hand me that cart-wheel and—and I'll tell you a whopper.

IKEY

[*Crossing and rendering the wheel up obediently;* ABIE *keeps fast hold of it so that he may be sure of his audience.*] What's a whopper?

ABIE

[*With bated breath.*] What I did in Sunday school.

IKEY

[*Also with lowered breath.*] In Sunday school?

ABIE

[*Shaking him.*] S—s—sh! You don't need to tell the neighborhood. Ikey, you think you'd understand if I'd tell you?

IKEY

[*Sitting in loving adoration of big brother, but still with a covetous eye on the cart-wheel.*] I—I'll try.

ABIE

And you'd never tell?

IKEY

Honest and true—black and blue—lay me down and——

ABIE

O, it wasn't so fierce. Most important principal thing is, you should not tell papa!

IKEY

Never tell any one in the world, Abie, only just you please give me my hoop.

ABIE

Aw, here's your old hoop. [IKEY *hugs it feverishly and sits on the steps, all attention.*] Now don't you budge while I look if anybody's listening. [*Makes a great business of peering in the corners of the alley.*] Coast's all clear. Guess pa's sleepin'.

IKEY

[*Not to be diverted.*] What's a sins?

ABIE

I don't exactly know, 'less it's nature. You know, Ikey, I *don't* understand about *this* sin.

IKEY

[*As if very anxious to help* ABIE *understand.*] I tell you, Abie. What's your sins?

ABIE

[*Holding* IKEY'S *hand, and trying to clear up things to his own mind.*] I don't care—I don't understand. It all came out from inside my brain. I didn't want to do it—I didn't plan it. But nobody understands, at least no grown folks.

IKEY

[*Anxious to sympathize.*] What's grown folks?

ABIE

O, everybody—fathers and mothers, and aunts—and—and Sunday school teachers.

IKEY

[*Tone of awe.*] Sunday school teachers!

ABIE

[*Still clutching* IKEY'S *hand.*] Now, Ikey, I want you to listen; and remember that not one other soul in this whole world knows anything about this—only you.

IKEY

[*Devotedly.*] Yes, Abie, only me!

ABIE

No, sirree; they just think I was crazy—or—or bad—or that all I did was to just purposely imagine——

IKEY

[*Perplexed, but* ABIE *disregards his confusion.*] Just imagine——

ABIE

And, Ikey, every time we had a Bible lesson, I liked it, I did. Do you think I ever *told* any one what a bully good time I was having in Sunday school? No, sir; they wouldn't believe me.

IKEY

[*Wonderingly.*] Bully time in Sunday school?

ABIE

Yes, sir, I always wanted to go, I did. I was just glad on Saturday, because it was the day before Sunday. Why, I even went to bed early the night before, so's Sunday school would come quicker. Of course, I never told anybody—— [*Suddenly suspicious.*] You'll never tell papa?

IKEY

[*Solemnly.*] I'll never tell papa.

ABIE

[*Waxing enthusiastic in reminiscence.*] It was great! They were all my chums, I tell you! David was my best chum; and Jonathan—I liked him too! [*Whispering.*] I never told *anybody* how keen I was on David!

IKEY

[*Still perplexed.*] David—who?

ABIE

O, just David. He didn't have any last name: he was the only one in the world.

IKEY

Did you *know* David?

ABIE

Of course, I did. That was all the trouble. I knew him as well as I know you. Used to sit and talk to him; an' he always told me all his sorrows—all the terrible things Saul did to him. I sympathized with David many a time, I did.

IKEY

[*Intensely interested.*] You saw him—*yourself?*

ABIE

Of course, I did. That was another part of the sin. Miss Gerty, she said I *couldn't* see him, and I used to stand up and argue with her. Told her he was just as plain to me as the nose on my face—told her I saw David often, and how fine and handsome and everything he was—told her I'd seen Jonathan often too, and old Saul. Why, I even knew exactly *how* long Saul's beard was. And David—well, David and I used to talk *everything* over fine.

IKEY

[*Remembering.*] Was that your sins?

ABIE

Wait! That was only the first part. The most awful sin—'least Miss Gerty made me feel it was awful—was when I had to tell about David and Goliath. She shouldn't 'ave asked me about it, 'cause she knew what a good friend of mine he was—and how I'd just seen it all——

IKEY

What did you seen?

ABIE

Look here what I saw. I'll show you just as I showed her. Only she kept saying I hadn't *seen* it—I'd just imagined it—and oughtn't *I* know, whether I'd seen it or not? [*As he draws himself up to his full height proudly.*] I showed Miss Gerty *exactly* what happened! Showed 'em how David had gone out, and picked up the stones, nice, smooth little round ones, like we got the time we went on the picnic—remember?

IKEY

[*Nodding.*] Uh—huh.

ABIE

[*As he begins to throw his arms about.*] And how he fixed 'em in his little sling; and how he aimed right for the middle of Goliath's head; and how, whoop! sizz! bing! he hit the giant in the forehead, and zookums—over he falls dead! I told 'em *exactly* how it all happened.

IKEY

[*Shouting as* ABIE *is still waving his arms.*] You *saw* all that, Abie, you *saw* all that?

ABIE

Sure, I *saw* it all! Didn't Dave and I talk it all over often, how he was going to find the middle of Goliath's forehead? 'cause right in the middle would be bound to kill him? And how anxious David was to find the right spot, because if he killed Goliath, all would be up with the Philistines? And I tell you David gave him his —just like this—zippity—bing—zippeee——

[*He waves his arms and aims as if to throw a pebble, when his father steps quietly out upon the door-step.*

MR. GOLDSTEIN

Abie, what are you doing?

ABIE

[*Subsiding at once and becoming sullen.*] Aw—nothin'.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

[*Trying to be stern.*] Don't you know it's Sunday? You want to get papa in trouble with the neighbors?

ABIE

Aw, they hate us anyway. We're Jews.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

[*Ignoring this.*] You tell papa what you were doing.

ABIE

You wouldn't understand.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

[*More patiently.*] You say the same thing about Sunday school. Now you tell papa, and see if he don't understand.

ABIE

[*Shaking his head sullenly.*] You're grown folks.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

[*More sternly; he has a package and his hat in one hand, and he puts on his hat and turns as if to go.*] If you don't tell papa this minute, I go right over to see Miss Gerty.

ABIE

[*In a panic.*] No, oh, no. You don't go to Miss Gerty——

IKEY

[*Pleadingly.*] Abie——

ABIE

[*In a panic that* IKEY *will tell, smothers his mouth with his hand.*] Look here, papa. I can't go back to Sunday school, it's—it's impossible.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

Unless you tell papa what you did, you got to go back.

ABIE

I was just bad, I was. You wouldn't understand—nobody does. [*Fiercely.*] Think I can go back to a place where they insult my friends?

MR. GOLDSTEIN

Listen, Abraham, papa does not understand what you are talking about. Every day for a week I have asked you the same thing, every day you give me the same answer. You want to worry papa, who was so proud of his big boy? You always loved Sunday school—now you don't tell papa why you don't go back. I cannot let Ikey play with you—— [*Begins to draw him away.*] Come, Ikey, we go to Miss Gerty.

IKEY

[*Beginning to cry.*] I want my Abie—I want my Abie——

[ABIE *still sullen as he hands* IKEY *over.*

MR. GOLDSTEIN

You won't tell papa?

ABIE

[*Gulping hard.*] I—I can't. You wouldn't understand.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

What you mean—insult your friends, Harry, or Charlie, or——?

ABIE

Aw, no—my dearest friends in the whole world. You don't know 'em, nobody does, nobody but me. They only talk to me.

MR. GOLDSTEIN

[*As he draws* IKEY *away.*] We go to Miss Gerty—unless——?

[*Last urgent look at* ABIE.

ABIE

[*Head sunk in hands, by this time almost at the point of tears.*] Nobody understands——

[MR. GOLDSTEIN *drags* IKEY *away, still rebellious and protesting, and* ABIE *is left alone on the steps. He emits a peculiar noise, a mixture between a sob and a groan. A little group of boys and girls appear around the corner of the alley; they spy* ABIE, *but at first hesitate to come forward. Finally* CHARLIE *makes the first move, the others come sauntering after, as carelessly as possible.* ABIE *at first takes no notice of them, then evinces a mild interest.*

CHARLIE STEINER

H'lo, there——

ABIE

H'lo.

HARRY FRANK

H'lo there, Abie. We missed you to-day.

ABIE

[*Suddenly suspicious.*] Somebody send you to get me?

CHARLIE

Say, what do you think we are, two-year olds? We just came to visit you.

SADIE MYERS

[*Softly.*] Aren't you glad to see us?

ABIE

Aw, yes, of course. Just thought you wanted to rag me about—about Sunday school.

HENRY JACOBS

[*Unable to repress his curiosity.*] Well—why didn't you come back?

ABIE

[*Immediately on the defensive.*] Look here, if you come here to talk about Sunday school——

CHARLIE

[*Quickly as he punches* HENRY.] Sure not; we never thought of it. We just come here to see you. Say, here's a box of candy we brought you.

ABIE

[*Rising eagerly.*] Say now, where'd you get that? Honest, is it for me?

JANIE GARSON

Of course, we brought it to you—from the closing exercises. You deserved it.

ABIE

[*Suddenly putting his hand back in his pocket; he had had it extended for the candy.*] Aw, no, I can't take it.

CLAUDIE ELSON

[*Eagerly, as she thrusts it into his hand.*] Now it's yours, Abie, don't be foolish! We all got some, for going all year——

CHARLIE

[*Interrupting.*] You're dreaming; it's just because the Board's always good to us.

SADIE MYERS

Of course, they are. Aren't we going to have the grandest picnic, up at Cove Hollow—and, O Abie, you're to come along!

ABIE

Say now, how do you think I can come along? I quit Sunday school. What do you think I am?

JANIE

Well, Abie, we're each allowed to invite somebody extra, and I guess you can't say no, if we all invite you.

ABIE

[*Sheepishly.*] You're foolin'! You haven't any reason to want me.

ARTHUR COHN

[*Who has been squirming around on one foot.*] I say, Abie, aren't you goin' to ask us to sit down? I thought you might want us to play. [*Looking around.*] My, but you got a grand alley. I wish I lived in an alley.

ABIE

[*With pride of place.*] Well, an alley has *some* advantages; but keep your eye peeled for the cop. Come along inside and help me out with some chairs.

[*The boys exit into the house, arms linked and the best of friends. As soon as they are inside—*

JANIE

[*Whispering to the girls.*] Aren't you glad we came? I thought it was awful for Abie to be left out of everything.

CLAUDIE

If we could only make him *want* to come back to Sunday school——

SADIE

[*With an air of determination.*] And that's just what we're *going* to do!

[*The boys come out with a few broken chairs, old soap boxes, etc. All settle themselves for a cozy meeting.*

ABIE

[*As amiably as possible.*] So long's you got that candy here, you might's well open it; pass it around.

JANIE

I guess not. We've all got boxes at home. You keep this yourself.

ABIE

[*Opening it and passing it around.*] Guess again. Think I want my pa to come home and

find it? He'd have another reason for wantin' me to go back to Sunday school.

HENRY

Well, it isn't such a hardship.

ABIE

[*Sullen again.*] Thought you wasn't gona talk about it?

HARRY

[*Quickly changing the subject.*] Say, Abie, you think the cop don't like us just because he knows we're Jewish?

ABIE

I don't know. Seems to me everybody round here don't like us. Maybe it's because we're Jews, and maybe it's just because we're poor.

CLAUDIE

Why, Abie, nobody ever hates anybody because they're poor. It isn't their fault, is it?

ABIE

[*Cunningly.*] Think people puzzle out what's other people's fault?

SADIE

Well, if they'd only reason out what the Jews have done for them, and how much we've got to be proud of, they wouldn't hate us at all.

ABIE

Aw, now, what've we got to be proud of—our noses?

HENRY

[*Getting excited.*] You know's well as we do. You remember we're the very oldest religion in the world. Say, if it hadn't been for the Jews, there never would have been any other religion here at all.

ARTHUR

Say, and you know what grand stories we have about the holidays. You know some of those fine old people back in the Bible——

ABIE

[*Still questioningly.*] Well, why aren't people nicer to us then?

CHARLIE

Because they haven't any better sense. Don't they ought to know if the Jews hadn't held on

so strong to their religion, there wouldn't be any religion for them at all?

ABIE

[*Sarcastically.*] You don't say so? Discover that all for yourself?

HARRY

[*Hotly.*] I should say we're just about the fathers of the whole world. We came first, and everybody else was glad to come snooping after.

CLAUDIE

Yes, and we went through the most awful tortures too. Joan of Arc wasn't in it.

ARTHUR

Ah, now, Abie, you remember how they put irons in their arms and feet and even hung 'em up by the hair—just because they *refused* to give up their religion.

ABIE

[*Still critically.*] Too bad we couldn't have lived then—known some of those old sports all right.

JANIE

Why, you've got a chance, all of us have, every day, to do something for our religion. You don't even want to be a Jew!

ABIE

[*A bit shamefaced.*] Yes, I do. I just don't want to go to Sunday school.

CLAUDIE

[*Softly.*] Not even to tell about your David?

ABIE

[*Angrily.*] You forget my David!

CHARLIE

[*Reminiscently.*] I guess that was some fight between David and Goliath. I never heard *anybody* tell it like you, Abie. Why, I could just see that fine young fellow pasting the old heathen right between the eyeballs—some fight all right!

JANIE

[*Softly.*] But I love Jonathan. I just wish I could *meet* Jonathan. Wasn't he the sweetest thing, all he did to save David—and he no relation at all?

HARRY

They've none of them got anything on Judas Maccabeus, that old warrior. Weren't they right to call him the Hammer? Why, I worship him more than—more than Julius Cæsar!

SADIE

[*Reflectively.*] You can have your Judases and Jonathans and Solomons—and even your Samuels and Moseses and Elijahs—but as for me, you just give me David. I'd give *anything* if once in my whole life I could *see* David!

ALL

[*Breaking in together.*] You've seen him, Abie; tell us about him—do!

ABIE

[*Incredulous.*] You really want me to tell you about him?

ALL

Sure we do; that's what we came for.

ABIE

[*Still incredulous.*] But Miss Gerty—she——

JANIE

She was proud of you, she was; only, of course, she had to *seem* to be angry, but in her heart of hearts she was proud!

ABIE

Proud? She sent me home.

HARRY

What did you expect, when you got up and argued with her—that you'd seen David and all.

ABIE

But I *had* seen David.

CLAUDIE

Not really, Abie, you know—not really.

ABIE

[*Weakening.*] Maybe not exactly.

SADIE

Well, I know Miss Gerty was proud, because she felt terrible you didn't come to-day, and she sent you this box of candy.

ABIE

[*Astonished.*] She *sent* me——

JANIE

Yes, Abie, and she just had to call you down because you were getting so excited, and because you showed us how you loved David so.

ABIE

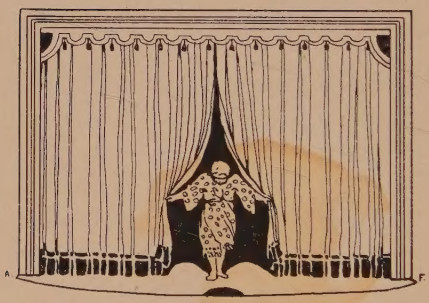
[*Eagerly.*] And you think I could come back *even* if I loved David so?

ALL

[*Crowding around him in eager welcome.*] Sure, just *because* you loved David so!

[*As they say these last words,* MR. GOLDSTEIN, MISS GERTY, *and little* IKEY *overhear and peer around the corner.* MR. GOLDSTEIN *makes a step forward, but* MISS GERTY, *seeing that the recalcitrant lamb has already been welcomed to the fold, draws* MR. GOLDSTEIN *back by the coat sleeve and murmurs, "Because he loved David so."*

CURTAIN



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